

STARS AND STRIPES[®]

**Misawa BX
set for night of
bargain madness**
Page 3



**Carlton feels no
pressure to be
a pop-star vixen**
Page 11



**D.C. financing deal could
mean short stay for Expos**
Page 30

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Army shifts focus to armor trucks in Iraq

With Humvees being taken care of, other vehicles get attention Page 4



Sasebo Elementary School music teacher DeEtte Hassen gestures while leading Sasebo kindergartners in song. More on Page 3.



PHOTOS BY GREG TYLER/Stars and Stripes

Sasebo Elementary School first-grade pupils, from left, Joel Encarnacion, Alyssa Alley, Megan Craig, Orielle Edwards and Monica Norman sing in front of an audience of about 200 at the Sasebo Naval Base, Japan, school's annual Christmas Concert on Wednesday.

Sasebo sing-along celebrates sounds of the season

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TODAY IN STRIPES

Abby, Annie's Mailbox.....	20
American Roundup.....	16-17
Classified.....	22-24
Comics.....	18-20
Crossword.....	19
Faces.....	11
Horoscope.....	18
Letters.....	14
Opinion.....	15
Sports.....	25-32
TV listings.....	13
Weather.....	21
Your Money.....	12

News Tracker ... What's new with old news

States

Rapper's death: The death of rapper O.D.B. was deemed an accident by the New York City medical examiner, who said Wednesday that he died from the combined effects of cocaine and a prescription painkiller.

O.D.B., whose legal name was Russell Jones, died at a Manhattan recording studio Nov. 13 "as a result of intoxication" by cocaine and the painkiller Tramadol, said Ellen Borakove, a spokeswoman for the New York City medical examiner's office.

O.D.B., 35, complained of chest pains before collapsing at the studio, and he was dead by the time paramedics reached him. O.D.B., also known as O' Dirty Bastard, was a founding member of the rap group the Wu-Tang Clan.

Michael Jackson investigation: Prosecutors in Michael Jackson's child molestation case want to introduce evidence that the singer has committed other sex crimes over the years that went unchanged.

Prosecutors argue in a motion released Tuesday that the evidence should be admitted under a 1995 California law that lets relevant previous acts, whether prosecuted or not, be considered in sex crime cases.

The motion from the district attorney's office, as well as a defense request for a six-week delay of the scheduled Jan. 31 trial, were released by the court with key sections blacked out and are scheduled for argument in hearings to begin Monday.



Jackson

Baby's severed-arms death: A McKinney, Texas, mother who admitted killing her baby daughter by severing the girl's arms was guided by a Bible passage in which Jesus refers to cutting off body parts to cast away sin, the woman's attorney said Tuesday.

Dena Schlosser, a 35-year-old housewife with a history of mental illness, has referred to the New Testament passage since the killing of 10-month-old Margaret, attorney David Haynes said.

Schlosser was charged with capital murder Nov. 22, after she told an emergency services operator she had cut off her baby's arms. Police found her in the living room, covered in blood, still holding a knife and is-

tening to a hymn.

Business

Time Warner-AOL fraud settlement: Time Warner Inc. has agreed to pay \$210 million to settle securities fraud charges involving the company's America Online unit, law enforcement officials said Wednesday.

Under terms of the settlement with the Justice Department, prosecution on charges of aiding and abetting securities fraud will be deferred provided that AOL and Time Warner cooperate in an ongoing investigation into whether AOL improperly helped smaller Internet companies artificially inflate their earnings.

An independent monitor will be chosen to oversee AOL's compliance and the company must agree to a number of changes in its internal practices, said a Justice Department official who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity.

Military

School strafing: Pilots will resume training Thursday at a military range that has been shut down since an F-16 fighter accidentally fired at an Little Egg Harbor Township, N.J., intermediate school last month, officials said.

Though training will resume at the Warren Grove Gunnery Range, no weapons will be fired for now. Changes have been made to increase safety, Col. Brian Webster said.

"We've implemented a number of new operational procedures and guidelines that allow us to safely resume temporary, limited, non-ordnance training," Webster said in a statement. He commands the 17th Fighter Wing of the New Jersey Air National Guard, which supervises the range.

World

Yushchenko's poisoning: New tests reveal the level of dioxin in the blood of Ukrainian presidential candidate Viktor Yushchenko is more than 6,000 times higher than normal, according to the expert analyzing the samples.

The concentration, about 100,000 units per gram of blood fat, is the second highest ever recorded, said Abraham Brouwer, professor of environmental toxicology at the Free University in Amsterdam, where blood samples taken last weekend in Vienna were sent for analysis.

A normal level of dioxin is between 15 and 45 units. Almost everyone has some

level of dioxins because the toxic chemical is widespread in the environment — mainly from its industrial uses — and accumulates in the food chain.

In the case of Yushchenko, Brouwer's team has narrowed the search from more than 400 dioxins to about 29 and is confident they will identify the poison by the end of the year. That, in turn, could provide clues for the investigation of the alleged poisoning.

Afghan attack: Provincial forces who came under attack killed in coalition artillery support that killed seven insurgents in northeastern Afghanistan, a U.S. official said Wednesday.

The clash occurred Monday night in Khost province, and no coalition or provincial forces were wounded, U.S. Maj. Mark McCann told a regular media briefing.

Indian train collision: Railway officials say a train collision in northern India that killed at least 37 people apparently was caused by a communications lapse between stations, and that the two stationmasters face criminal charges in the disaster.

An express passenger train and a local train collided head-on Tuesday in a rural stretch of northern Punjab state, killing both drivers plus 35 other people aboard the trains. Rescuers had recovered all bodies by Wednesday and the tracks were cleared for traffic to resume, Railway spokesman M.Y. ddiqui said.

War on terrorism

Request for clemency: U.S. Sen. Mike DeWine asked the Army to grant clemency to two Ohio soldiers imprisoned for taking Army vehicles abandoned in Kuwait by other units so they could carry out their own unit's mission to Iraq.

In a letter to Lt. Gen. Thomas Metz, commander of the multinational force in Iraq, DeWine asked that the punishment for Darrell Birt, of Columbus, and Maj. Cathya Kaus be reduced to time served.

Birt, Kaus and four other members of the 66th Transportation Company based in Springfield, Ohio, were court-martialed and charged with theft, destruction of Army property and conspiracy to cover up their crimes.

Photos and stories from wire services

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Scouts deliver goods to orphans

BY VINCE LITTLE

Stars and Stripes

About 30 Cub Scouts and their families from Pack 34, Camp Zama, Japan, made their eighth annual pilgrimage to the Aikekai Orphanage in Machida last Saturday, delivering more than 1,200 pounds of donations gathered during a one-day food drive in November.

The group also carried a monetary contribution of 35,000 yen, about \$332, to the local facility, which houses almost 50 children ages 5 and younger.

After loading up a truck that morning at the Sugamihara Housing Area, Pack 34 members traveled to Machida and formed a human chain inside the orphanage, passing along items such as rice, canned fruits and vegetables, diapers, dehydrated potatoes, wet wipes, baby food, juice boxes and bottled juice. The entire haul exceeded last year's collection by about 200 pounds.

Air Force Tech. Sgt. Tom Snider, a den leader and pack spokesman, labeled Saturday's effort a huge success.

"Things went very well," he said. "It's extremely rewarding for everyone who went on the trip. It allows the kids to meet other children of a different nationality, and it lets us provide a service and promote good citizenship in the community, which is one of the tenets of Cub scouting."

Rice comprised roughly half of the donations, Snider said. The food drive, organized by Sheri Muzzey, took place Nov. 21 at the Camp Zama and Sugamihara Housing Area commissaries.

After Saturday's handover, the scouts spent time interacting with the Japanese orphans.

Snider said the Cub Scouts always get a tremendous response from the orphanage, which was "extremely pleased about the visit and the donations."

"I think the kids there are somewhat timid at first," he said. "But once they get to playing with some toys on the floor and taking pictures, it's a great time for everyone."

"Pack 34 would like to thank the generosity of the Camp Zama community. Folks that live here and go to the commissary are the ones who made this happen. Without their donations, we couldn't have made the trip."

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Misawa Midnight Madness mixes sales, entertainment

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN

Stars and Stripes

MISAWA AIR BASE, Japan — The "Midnight Madness" holiday sale at Misawa's base exchange appears aptly named. Army and Air Force Exchange Service officials at Misawa say they expect more than 5,000 people to pass through the store for Friday's 9 p.m.-to-midnight shopping extravaganza.

During last December's inaugural "Midnight Madness," lines began forming between 4 and 5 p.m. When the gate opened, it took 21 minutes for waiting customers to file inside.

Store managers expect an even bigger crowd this time.

"Anticipation with the community is growing," said Wayne Hansen, Misawa exchange general manager. "It's more than just a shopping experience. It's entertainment at the same time."

The draw is a mix of more than \$6,000 in prizes to be given away — including a \$4,000, 42-inch Sony plasma television — an eating contest featuring mysterious Japanese food, a 3-hour running marathon for a treadmill and the promise of super sales. Special discounts include a 30-percent

markdown on DVD players and \$100 off the first 20 Hewlett-Packard computers sold. Anyone who wears pajamas gets 10 percent off any one item in the store, AAFES officials said, with a maximum savings of \$100.

Judging by last year's sale, Friday will be an evening in which thousands of customers pursue slashed ticket prices or that last-minute holiday present. Store officials say they anticipate no problems.

"We'll have our own security in the store, and every manager will be working," Hansen said. "We have exits all over the store."

Mike Patmon, Misawa BX sales and merchandise manager, said room temperature inside the 45,000-square foot building will be cooled prior to the sale. The store closes at 8 p.m. for one hour while employees set up.

Special discount items are spaced throughout the store to help with crowd control, Hansen said. While in the past customers have squabbled over who found an item first, Patmon said, last year's holiday Midnight Madness saw no fights or injuries.

"We did have a lot of people here ... but it was a lot calmer

than we experienced the day after Thanksgiving," he said.

About 3,000 people made purchases during the 2003 Midnight Madness; sales for the night eclipsed \$200,000.

Other AAFES stores hold similar sales, officials said. Yokota Air Base near Tokyo, for instance, is to hold a Midnight Madness sale from 9 p.m. to midnight Saturday. But within the AAFES world, Misawa has one of the largest such sales during the holidays, AAFES Misawa officials said.

"We get the community involved a little more," Patmon said.

American Forces Network's EDGE Radio 1575 is broadcasting advance word about Midnight Madness, and AFN disc jockeys were to cover the event live Friday night.

Patmon said AAFES officials negotiate months ahead of time with vendors for special deals. The plasma TV is a promotion through Misawa New Car Sales, Sony and the Misawa BX.

On Friday, cash registers are slated to stay open until 2 a.m. Several food-court eateries also are planning to stay open during the sale.

E-mail Jennifer H. Svan at: svanjp@strips.osd.mil

Sweet sounds of music



Sasebo Elementary School music teacher DeEtte Hansen leads pupils, from left, Mattie Espiritu, Lisa Reese and Taylor Ingram in songs in front of an audience of about 200 at the Sasebo Naval Base, Japan, school's annual Christmas Concert Wednesday night.

GREG TYLER
Stars and Stripes

Fun planned at Iwakuni Jingle Bell Jog

BY GREG TYLER

Stars and Stripes

Up to 1,000 people are expected to take part in the annual Jingle Bell Jog at Iwakuni Marine Corps Air Station, a Christmas-themed costume jog around the base for 10 a.m. Wednesday, base officials said.

The 2K-run/walk, open to all base personnel, will be led this year by the NFL's Chicago Honey Bears cheerleaders.

Last year the event had 965 participants, officials said.

"This is kind of a wacky event on base where everyone comes out and just relaxes and has fun," said Master Sgt. Lesli Coady, base spokeswoman. "It's going to be good for the base this year, allowing participants a chance to just blow off some steam and have a good time."

Marine Corps community Services and Semper Fit sponsor the event. Semper Fit will award \$200 and \$100 respectively for the party funds of the best-dressed and most motivated military units.

The best civilian team costume wins a \$200 gift certificate; the best family team, a \$100 gift certificate. Individual age group winners also are to receive from \$30 to \$75 gift certificates.

After the run, a free lunch, drawings and door prizes are scheduled at the Sasebo Gym for run participants, capped by a special Honey Bears performance.

Prizes include a Canon digital camera, Xbox, stereo, CD player and a six-foot Christmas stockings filled with toys and MCCS gift certificates. All participants under 17 will receive a \$5 MCCS gift certificate and a gift from Santa.

The grand prize is an MCCS Information, Travel and Tours trip for two adults to the Sapporo Ice Festival.

Groups and individuals interested in taking part should e-mail Billie Scott at billiescott@usmc-mccs.org or call 253-6883 by the end of the day Friday.

E-mail Greg Tyler at: tylereg@strips.osd.mil

Yokota Self-Help Store

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Due to the upcoming Aerospace Expeditionary Force deployment, the Yokota Self-Help Store will change its hours of operation beginning Jan. 3, base officials said.

The new hours are:

■ Monday, Wednesday and Friday: 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., or 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. during wing exercises.

■ Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday: closed.

Call DSN 225-7086 for more information.

Christmas drop

Operation Christmas Drop is back on.

The Air Force's 52nd annual mission to deliver supplies to remote Pacific islands was postponed from the week due to typhoon watch. But the storm stayed well to the south of Guam, allowing C-130 cargo planes from Yokota Air Base, Japan, to resume flights Tuesday, said Anderson Air Force Base, Guam, spokesman Tech. Sgt. Jeff Capenos.

"They've delivered approximately 28,000 pounds of goods," Capenos said Wednesday.

Capenos didn't know the total weight to be delivered, but he said 60 boxes would be dropped on 59 islands throughout Micronesia and Northern Marianas this week, weather permitting.

Most of the islands included in the annual goodwill mission are too small for planes to land on. Many have few inhabitants who, cut off by a wide expanse of ocean, wouldn't otherwise be able to acquire some of the items delivered via the Christmas drop. Capenos said that local businesses, government and private organizations this year donated everything from toys and sports gear to rice and toothpaste.

"It's things they don't have that they definitely can use," he said.

U.S. Hiroshima victim

The name of a U.S. military pilot killed by the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, was added Monday to the names of victims at Hiroshima National Peace Memorial Hall for the Atomic Bomb Victims.

A B-24 bomber pilot, Joseph Dubinsky, was 27 when the blast killed him. He was a prisoner of war in Hiroshima after his bomber was shot down on July 28, 1945, said local historian Shigeaki Mori. Mori said he believes Dubinsky, from Washington, Pa., was a second lieutenant.

When Dubinsky's bomber was shot down, it was one of 34 on a mission to attack Japanese vessels moored at Kure Bay. Five of 11 crewmembers parachuted out of the plane. Dubinsky fainter after his parachute got stuck on a pine tree.

Mori registered Dubinsky's name on behalf of his half-brother, Brian S. Dubinsky of Potomac, Md., who also provided Dubinsky's photo for the memorial hall.

Dubinsky is the eighth American servicemember to be registered at the hall.

From staff reports

Armors focus to armoring trucks in Iraq

BY LISA BURGESS
Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — After expanding its contract to acquire armored Humvees at a rate of 550 per month instead of 450, the Army has now turned its focus toward armoring its trucks in Iraq by June, Army officials said Wednesday.

And in the future, thanks to lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan, all Army vehicles will be designed so they can be quickly armored with a kit — even if that vehicle was never designed for combat, according to Gary Motsek, the Army's deputy director for support operations at the U.S. Army Materiel Command at Fort Belvoir, Va.

"We can't just go ahead and disregard the lessons of this campaign," Motsek said. "We are adapting our truck strategies now, [because] we'll never again assume that if you are going to operate a truck fleet, that it's going to be in conditions [that are] safe and secure."

The Humvee issue is now on track and fully funded, said Maj. Gen. Stephen Speakes, who joined Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Sorenson and other Army officials to discuss the armoring issue.

"A year ago, Humvees were the priority," Speakes said. "Now with the increase of lethality on the battlefield, it's time to



LISA BURGESS/Stars and Stripes

Gary Motsek, the Army's deputy director for support operations at the U.S. Army Materiel Command at Fort Belvoir, Va., shows the armored plating on the door of a HEMTT, the Army's Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck, at the Pentagon on Wednesday.

take care of the bigger trucks, and we're doing that."

The Army has sought out manufacturers to acquire armor kits for the larger vehicles. In August 2003, there were seven companies that supplied armor kits. There are now more than 20.

Today, 53 percent of the medium and heavy vehicles in Iraq that commanders

have said they would like armored actually have such protection, according to statistics provided by the Army.

Speakes, who is in charge of Force Development for the Army, said the service plans to spend \$4.1 billion to armor all of its wheeled vehicles by next summer.

The project to armor every wheeled transport vehicle will include armoring

5,878 "medium transport vehicles," such as five-ton trucks, and 4,443 "heavy transport vehicles," such as the 10-ton Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck (HEMTT), according to the statistics.

"We believe that by June, we will have Level I and Level II armor on the [remaining wheeled] forces," Speakes said.

Level I is the Army's term for vehicles that were built from the ground-up to support armor, including a reinforced chassis to support the extra weight and configurations of the plating.

Level II is what the Army calls specially designed kits that are manufactured in the United States, then shipped to the Iraq theater for soldiers to install on their vehicles.

There is another Level, Level III, which Army officials say to describe the ad-hoc additions that soldiers devise on their own to protect their vehicles in the field.

Armoring vehicles not normally designed for combat operations became a serious issue in Iraq starting in early September 2003, as improvised explosive devices began to take more and more of a toll on U.S. forces in Iraq.

The Senate Armed Services Committee will hold hearings on the Iraq war when the new Congress convenes next month, including an examination of criticism that the Defense Department failed to prepare for the insurgency and went into action with a shortage of armor for trucks and Humvees, the panel's ranking Democrat, Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., told the Washington Post on Tuesday.

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Bombing kills seven at shrine in Karbala

BY PAUL GARWOOD
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — A bomb exploded at the gate of a revered Shiite shrine Wednesday, killing seven people in an apparent attempt to kill an aide to Iraq's top Shiite cleric and casting the shadow of violence over the first day of campaigning in the country's crucial January elections.

The attack in Karbala, which wounded the representative of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, came hours after the campaign kicked off, with Iraqi interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi announcing his candidacy. Allawi's defense minister accused Iranian and Syrian intelligence agents of helping insurgents in Iraq.

Also on Wednesday, a Western official in Baghdad said Saddam's notorious right-hand man, Ali Hassan al-Majid, known as "Chemical Ali," would be among the first to appear in court next week to face charges for crimes allegedly committed during Saddam's 35-year dictatorship. Al-Majid said earlier that formal indictments could be issued against some of Saddam's top deputies next month — just ahead of the Jan. 30 election.

Ali Hassan al-Majid, who was No. 2 on the coalition's deck of most-wanted playing cards, is accused of ordering the 1988 Halabja chemical weapons attacks against Kurds, the 1990 invasion of Kuwait and suppressing a 1991 Shiite uprising in southern Iraq.

He is among 12 regime members, facing a face trial, including Saddam, who was arrested a year ago Monday.

The blast south of Baghdad undid victories over security during the campaign and the election, with insurgents expected to attempt to derail the vote creating a national assembly.

While Iraq's Shiite Muslim majority has welcomed an election it likely will disappoint, Sunni Arabs have expressed fears they will be eclipsed and some have called for a boycott of the vote. Ali al-Sistani has backed a coalition of major Shiite political parties that has put forward a list of candidates and is expected to do well in the first national election since Saddam's fall.

Sunni militants have been active in past attacks against Shiites and their holy sites. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for Wednesday's bombing.

The blast went off at the western gate of the Imam Hussein Shrine in Karbala, killing seven people and wounding 31, said Dr. Abdul-Abbas Al-Timimi, director of Al-Husseini hospital. Al-Sistani's representative, Sheikh Abdul Mahdi al-Karbalaiee, was among the wounded, and an al-Sistani spokesman said the al-Sistani was the intended target of the blast. Several of his bodyguards were among the dead and wounded, the spokesman said. Hamed al-Khafaf — told Al-Jazeera television.

Navy investigated alleged abuses

BY PAISLEY DODDS
The Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Newly released U.S. Navy documents portray a series of abuse cases facing beyond Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison where photos surfaced this year of U.S. troops forcing prisoners — often naked — to pose in humiliating positions.

The files released Tuesday document a crush of abuse allegations, most from the early months of the U.S. occupation of Iraq, including U.S. Marines forcing Iraqi juveniles to kneel while troops discharge a weapon in a mock execution and the use of an electric shock on a prisoner.

The approximately 10,000 files include investigation reports from the Naval Criminal Investigative Service and witness interviews.

All names have been blacked out in the documents, which were released after a federal court ordered the government to comply with a Freedom of Information Act petition filed by the American Civil Liberties Union, the Center for Constitutional Rights and other organizations.

"This kind of widespread abuse could not have taken place without a leadership failure of the highest order," said ACLU Executive Director Anthony D. Romero.

The Pentagon says cases of abuse are taken seriously and investigated.

"The fact that these cases have been investigated underscores the point that we've been making, which is when we have credible allegations of abuse we take them seriously and investigate them," said Maj. Michael Shavers, a Pentagon spokesman.

Some of the documents include the alleged executions of Iraqis.

The Navy found the allegations to be "unsubstantiated" and closed the investigation. It remains unclear whether any other military branches are investigating.

In one of the reports, a Marine said he and two others were ordered to kill three Iraqis.

"The executions allegedly took place in early April 2003 while the unit was temporarily based at an abandoned Iraqi pharmaceutical factory south of Baghdad," according to the NCIS document, dated June 26, 2003.

The Marine said he was threatened with death if he did not carry out the order. The bodies of the dead Iraqis allegedly were dumped in a hole, the document said.

After the incident was reported, the Marines were interviewed.

One, who was interviewed and advised of his rights, retracted his previous statements, saying the executions never took place.

He said he "made up the story to tell his friends — unlike his colleagues, he didn't have good stories to tell about his deployment to Iraq," the report said. It added that the Marine said he was drunk and made up the story while at a party.

The suspect, whose name along with others allegedly involved was blacked out, was given a polygraph test, "an evaluation of the examination indicated [he] was being truthful in his responses."

Troops have said many of them are trained in ways to trick polygraph examinations. It was unclear whether the Marine was disciplined for the alleged fabrication.

At least 10 prisoner deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan have been investigated by the military; eight were determined to be justified killings of an escaping or dangerously violent prisoner.

Several Marines have been charged in connection with the treatment of a member of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party who died of strangulation after a Marine grabbed him by the neck at a holding facility. Investigators ruled that the death was accidental, but other investigations are pending.

In another of the documents, a Navy corpsman is quoted as saying, "there was a lot of peer pressure to keep one's mouth shut."

IN THE WORLD

Japan dismisses North Korea's 'war' remark

BY AUDREY MCAVOY
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Japanese officials on Wednesday brushed off a North Korean statement saying it would consider sanctions imposed by Tokyo "a declaration of war," and renewed calls to penalize the North for failing to account fully for Japanese citizens it abducted decades ago.

China's prime minister, meanwhile, reportedly urged Japan to show restraint on the matter to avoid derailing multinational talks on dismantling the North's nuclear weapons program.

Pressure has been building in Japan for the government to halt trade or impose other economic penalties on the North to prod it to divulge more about the Japanese citizens it kidnapped in the 1970s and 1980s.

A spokesman for the North Korean Foreign Ministry warned Japan it would consider sanctions an act of war.

"If sanctions are applied... we will regard it as a declaration of war against our government and promptly react to the action by an effective physical method," the spokesman said in a statement carried by

Officials renew calls for sanctions on North after abductee remains prove to be fraudulent

the official Korean Central News Agency on Wednesday. It didn't elaborate.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda and other Japanese officials refused to comment on the statement.

Calls for sanctions mounted last week after a DNA analysis conducted on remains Pyongyang said belonged to one of the abduction victims showed they were instead those of two unknown people.

On Tuesday, a spokesman for the North Korean Foreign Ministry accused Tokyo of distorting the test results, angering Japanese lawmakers.

"It's terrible," said ruling Liberal Democratic Party lawmaker Yoshihide Suga, who sits on a panel mulling sanctions against the North.

"North Korea is often called a rogue state, but this proves it," he said Wednesday.

Shinzo Abe, the LDP's acting secretary-general and a leading advocate of

sanctions, said the reclusive regime's behavior only proved that dialogue would go nowhere.

"It is unforgivable that they sent a stranger's bones" to the parents of the kidnap victim, Abe said. "But that they would try to disregard their own behavior and accuse us of falsifying the results makes it clear there is no point to continuing talks with North Korea."

Even Kazuo Shi, the head of the Japan Communist Party, said sanctions may become necessary.

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, however, has argued that such action could make further progress on the kidnappings impossible.

"We need to clarify what their true intentions are," Koizumi told reporters Wednesday. He added that Pyongyang's real meaning may differ from its official statements.

Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, meanwhile, urged visiting Japanese law-

makers to avoid taking any steps that might disrupt six-nation talks on dismantling the North's nuclear program, according to Japanese public broadcaster NHK.

The two Koreas, the United States, Russia, China and Japan have held three rounds of talks on the North's nuclear program. A fourth round scheduled for September was postponed and a new date hasn't been set.

North Korea has admitted kidnapping 13 Japanese citizens to train spies. Pyongyang allowed five of them to return to Japan in 2002, saying the other eight were dead. North Korea, however, has offered no convincing proof of the deaths, and many in Japan suspect some of the victims may still be alive.

The North Koreans handed over two sets of human remains to Japanese negotiators last week as proof that two of the kidnapping victims were dead. Tests, however, showed that the remains belonged to other, unidentified people.

The two groups of Japanese lawmakers passed resolutions calling for a threat of sanctions against North Korea. A survey released Tuesday by Japan's largest newspaper, the Yomiuri Shimbun, 74 percent of voters favored sanctions.

Honda robot hits its stride, learns to jog

BY YURI RAGEYAMA
The Associated Press

WAKO, Japan — The walking, talking child-size robot from Honda Motor Co. now manages an easy, although comical, jog — the latest in the Japanese automaker's quest to imitate human movement.

The 51-inch-tall, bubble-headed robot added a couple of infrared cameras and a sensor to better absorb shock and keep its balance for a steady, mechanical-looking run at a slow pace of 1.9 mph in a demonstration Wednesday at a Honda facility.

The robot called Asimo, a take on the Japanese word for "legs" or "ashi," debuted four years ago and has undergone several upgrades.

The latest has a rotating hip that

counters the impact of landing on the ground when running — an activity that's different from walking in that both feet must be off the ground in a hop at a given point in time.

The new Asimo is a bit smarter, loaded with a CPU equivalent of about five personal computers, and can dodge people and other obstacles in its path when moving on an instructed destination, forming its own route according to a map program inside its brain.

Although Asimo already has climbed up and down stairs and carried on simple conversations with voice-recognition capability, it still can't step over things in its way or run up and down slopes, Honda officials said.

The new machine moves about



Asimo, Honda Motor Co.'s walking, jogging robot, steps backward as it shakes hands with a model in Wako, Japan, on Wednesday.

twice as fast as the previous model, which walked at a speed of 1 mph.

The upgrade also has a sensor in its wrist so it can be led by the hand with a pull and walks backward if it's slightly nudged with a push.

The new Asimo also gained a moving thumb and is smart enough to reach toward an extended hand, delivering a more realistic handshake — an asset for its job as ambassador for Honda. In the past, a person had to find Asimo's mechanical hand.

Asimo has rung the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange, accompanied the prime minister on an overseas trip and shaken hands with dignitaries. It's not for sale.

What Honda really wants is a robot that can help with tasks.

Honda is hoping Asimo will be running errands, delivering relatively light things such as mail, working side by side with Honda employees perhaps by 2010, said Takano Ito, a managing director.

But Asimo is not about to replace auto workers at Honda plants any time soon.

Afghan abduction ends in slaying of engineer

BY PAUL ALEXANDER
The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — The latest abduction of a foreigner in Afghanistan — a Turkish engineer working on a U.S.-sponsored road construction project ended, when the kidnappers killed him, apparently so he wouldn't slow them on their trail.

Eyup Orel was working for Serhat, a Turkish subcontractor for U.S.-based The Louis Berger Group, said company vice president Tom Nicastro. An Australian pilot for Berger was killed in February when a man raked his helicopter with AK-47 fire.

Orel was the second Turkish engineer to be killed in the restive Afghan countryside this year. Security forces found his body during a massive search operation, said Jamil Jumshad, head of the Interior Ministry's anti-terrorism division.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility. Bandits and insurgents from the Taliban and other Islamic extremist groups operate in the area about 110 miles east of the capital, Kabul, officials said.

President Hamid Karzai condemned the killing, and ordered security agencies "to use any means possible" to bring the perpetrators to justice.

"I am angered that the enemies of Afghanistan have killed a brother and fellow Muslim in pursuit of their goal of disrupting reconstruction in Afghanistan," he said in a statement.

The U.S. Embassy said it was "angered and saddened."

The enemies of Afghanistan "are again trying to harm and intimidate those who are committed to helping Afghanistan," an embassy statement said. The cowardly act will not deter

U.S. resolve to help Afghanistan stand on its feet."

Orel had been shot six or seven times in the head and torso. Kumar provincial police chief Matallah Sohe said, adding that it appeared the kidnappers killed him so they could move faster and left his body high up a mountain peak to be moved in to try to capture them.

The kidnappers escaped, taking advantage of the rugged, forested terrain, Sohe said.

The body was found around 7 a.m. by a search party of about 20-30 police and villagers, who then needed 2 1/2 hours to carry it to lower ground, Sohe said. A helicopter was brought in to evacuate the body. It was not immediately clear where it was being taken.

The driver and interpreter, freed before dawn, reported that 12 armed men in military uniforms surrounded their car late Tuesday afternoon as they traveled from the road project in Kunar province to the city of Jalalabad, where they'd been staying.

Police found the car abandoned.

The kidnappers later exchanged gunfire with police, manning a nearby security post on the road, and one police officer was wounded, Jumshad said.

Security, particularly in the countryside, is one of Karzai's top priorities ahead of parliamentary elections in the spring.

In March, Afghan forces freed two kidnapped Turkish engineers and an Afghan translator in a shootout with that left their two captors dead and two Afghan soldiers injured. Another Turkish engineer and an Afghan soldier were killed during the abduction a week earlier on an embassy statement said. The abduction in Kabul to the turbulent south.

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Ridge: Reconsider scale

SAN DIEGO — Outgoing Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge said Tuesday that the government should reconsider how it warns people about security threats, conceding that its color-coded scale has invited "questions and even occasional derision."

Ridge, who plans to step down after President Bush names a successor, defended the color-coded warnings but said the public may want more specifics when the threat level is changed.

tor missile failed to launch early Wednesday in what was to have been the first full flight test of the U.S. national missile defense system in nearly two years.

The Missile Defense Agency has attempted to conduct the test several times this month, but scrubbed each one for a variety of reasons, including various weather problems.

An announcement said the interceptor experienced an automatic shutdown "due to an unknown anomaly."

Anthrax attack study

NEW YORK — Giving a

new-generation anthrax vaccine along with antibiotics in response to a terrorist attack wouldn't prevent much disease, but it could help by letting people take the medicines for a briefer time, a U.S. study suggests.

In fact, it would make more sense to use an anthrax vaccine after an attack than to try to carry out mass vaccination beforehand, said Ron Brookmeyer of Johns Hopkins University, lead author of the study.

The computerized analysis of the role of an anthrax vaccine is presented in Thursday's issue of the journal *Nature*.

Slain guitarist mourned

ARLINGTON, Texas — The smoke was thick, the music loud. The rum and the bourbon flowed, and so did the tears.

Guitar-shaped funeral wreaths lined the stage as thousands of grieving fans, many wearing concert T-shirts, gathered Tuesday night to remember slain rock star "Dimebag" Darrell Abbott.

The 38-year-old Abbott — best known as the former guitarist for Pantera — was shot to death last week in Columbus, Ohio, while performing with his new band, Damageplan. The public memori-

al service followed a private funeral Tuesday.

High surf predictions

HONOLULU — Predictions of surf reaching as high as 50 feet during high tide on Oahu's North Shore had civil defense authorities on Tuesday preparing for the worst and surfing organizers preparing for a seldom-held big wave contest.

A handful of beaches on Oahu were closed Tuesday, and Kauai County officials closed beaches on the Garden Isle's north shore as a precaution but expected them to reopen Wednesday.

From The Associated Press

Sprint buys Nextel

NEW YORK — Telecommunications giant Sprint Corp. is acquiring Nextel Communications Inc. in a \$35 billion deal that would create the nation's third largest wireless telephone service provider.

The transaction, announced Wednesday, would create a company called Sprint Nextel with about \$40 billion in combined yearly revenue and more than 35 million wireless subscribers, trailing only Cingular Wireless and Verizon Wireless.

The companies estimated the merger would save them \$12 billion in operating costs and network upgrades.

Missile test fails

WASHINGTON — An intercep-



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Education Focus

**In Sunday
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Marines get a grip on fast-rope skills

Training with AF parajumpers in Philippines adds to 'bag of tricks'

By JULIANA GITTIER

Stars and Stripes

CLARK AIR BASE, Philippines — A rope drops from the helicopter, and without a second's hesitation, the first of a succession of Marines jumps, sliding 20 to 30 feet to the rotor-washed ground.

That's not the time to figure out who goes where.

To practice insertion and forming a secure perimeter around an aircraft, Marines assigned to the Quick Reaction Force for the current humanitarian mission in the Philippines rehearsed the orchestrated maneuvers from a unique aircraft: an Air Force HH-60G Pave Hawk.

As part of the Joint Task Force helping deliver supplies to desperate communities in the Philippines, the Air Force brought three of the helicopters, similar to the Army's Black Hawk, to conduct search-and-rescue operations if needed. When Marines

and Air Force officials realized the training opportunity, they brought the Air Force aircraft and pararescue jumpers together with the Marines to train.

"It's a different platform for us," said Marine Capt. Van Osborne, commander of the Combat Engineer Company, Combat Assault Battalion, 3rd Marine Division at Camp Schwab, Okinawa, and the Joint Task Force ground combat commander. His Marines are serving as the Philippine mission's Quick Reaction Force.

For some of the engineer Marines, the training provided a first experience with fast-rope insertion, grabbing onto a rope and sliding down without tellers. Only a steady grip with hands and feet separated them from a

free-fall.

"It's another thing for our bag of tricks," said Sgt. Daniel Verdue, 4th Platoon Guide for the company. "It's good for the Marines — they get to learn something new. The more training



JIM SCHULZ/Stars and Stripes

Pfc. Kenneth Carbaugh from the Combat Assault Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, holds a defensive perimeter during fast-rope training Wednesday in the Philippines. The Combat Assault Battalion is acting as the Quick Reaction Force to provide security during relief efforts in the Philippines.

they get, the happier they are."

The Marines were excited to do the training and to work with the Air Force.

"I was waiting all week for this," said Lance Cpl. Trevor Johnson with the Combat Engineer Company, who never before had been in a helicopter.

Despite an initial unease, courtesy of a small fear of heights, Johnson said he loved the experience. From the helicopter, he said, "everything looks really small."

He said the training helps the

current mission and could come in handy for him as a combat engineer should he ever need to drop into a battle. The Air Force pararescue jumpers, from the 320th Special Tactics Squadron and the 31st Rescue Squadron from Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, provided training and assistance.

"They briefed us on how everything is going to work," he said. "They're very professional and that's how they were with us."

Although the two services historically have enjoyed a healthy competitiveness, the Marines

said they were eager to work with the pararescue jumpers.

"The PJs are the best of the Air Force. It doesn't bother me in the least to work with the best of their service," Johnson said.

The joint training shows the potential for the two services to train together in the future, Osborne said.

"I think it's going to open up some training opportunities for us when we get back to Okinawa," he said.

E-mail Juliana Gittier at: gittier@starsandstripes.com

Maintenance crew's long hours keep aging Phrogs hopping

By JULIANA GITTIER

Stars and Stripes

CLARK AIR BASE, Philippines — Flying up to nine hours a day carrying maximum loads to support relief efforts in the storm-ravaged Philippines could wreak havoc on the Marine Corps' 40-year-old CH-46E Sea Knights.

But a swarm of aircraft maintainers accompanying them makes sure the strain doesn't stop the mission, working as much as 18 hours a day to keep the old birds aloft.

The helicopters, affectionately called Phrogs because they resemble frogs and are amphibious, carry food, clothing and medical supplies to remote communities pummeled by recent storms and mudslides.

For every hour the aircraft flies, about 25 man-hours of maintenance is required. Each day, maintainers arrive to work by 4 a.m. to start the multitude of checks to ready the aircraft, and



JIM SCHULZ/Stars and Stripes

Maintenance Marines of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 262 perform an inspection of a CH-46E on Wednesday after a full day of flying supplies to relief centers south of Manila, Philippines.

in the evening they spend hours preparing them for the next day's mission.

"It's just on the backs of the maintenance guys that these

things are still flying," said Maj. Karl Johnson, a pilot and operations officer for Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 262 from Futenma Marine Corps Air Station

in Okinawa.

Some of the six helicopters working in the Philippines have patch marks that aircraft records show are from where bullets hit them in Vietnam. They're older than almost everyone in the squadron.

But the aircraft have proved vital in moving supplies to remote communities for the Philippine government.

For the maintainers, the Philippines work is an opportunity to do what they're trained to do in a real-life mission, and to help, despite not being on the operation's front lines.

"I'm not out handing out food to the people," said Cpl. Ryan Waltz, an airframe with the squadron. But by helping to keep the aircraft flying, "I play an important role in getting these people food."

Squadron leaders said they hope to get the maintainers out to see some of the damaged sites during their stay in the Philippines. "It's hard when you sit back and work, work, work and

never see the results," said Warrant Officer Emanuel Young, the maintenance and materiel control officer for the squadron.

Every evening as the aircraft return, maintainers are ready to deal with any repair, from replacing a small part to replacing a hydraulic wire, one of the biggest challenges they might face, Waltz said. They also do routine tune-ups and overhauls.

The aircraft are some of the Marine Corps' oldest, but they're suited for the widest range of missions, from their primary one of moving Marines to the current operation carrying relief aid, Young said.

For all their hours flying, the personnel behind them is what keeps them going.

"They're able to maintain the aircraft so well, they're able to extend the life of it," he said. "It's really effective maintenance, because it's operating."

E-mail Juliana Gittier at: gittier@starsandstripes.com

Adoption reality show appalls some viewers

BY DAVID BAUDER
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — The Fox network said Tuesday it will air a special next month, "Who's Your Daddy?", where a daughter given up for adoption as an infant attempts to guess the identity of her birth father for a \$100,000 prize.

Adoption activists immediately attacked the special, which will air for 90 minutes on Jan. 3.

"This is really perverse," said Adam Pertman, executive director of the Evan P. Donaldson Adoption Institute, a research and policy organization. "It takes a deeply personal and important experience and

turns it into a money-grubbing game show. I think it is despicable."

A Fox network spokesman would not comment on the special, referring all calls to the producers, who said people shouldn't judge before watching.

"I find it curious that people are calling it that without having seen an episode," said Scott Hallock, one of three executive producers of the series for the Fox Television Studios.

"You might get the impression from the title that it is somehow salacious or exploitive. But nothing could be further from the truth."

The woman who is the focus of the show,

not identified by Fox, and her birth father were both involved in simultaneous searches for each other.

Her natural dad will be one of eight men presented to her, all claiming to be her father.

She will be given opportunities to observe and interview the men to narrow the field, the network announced.

If she correctly guesses which man is her father, the woman can win as much as \$100,000. If she is incorrect, the impostor that she chose will win the money, Fox said.

Either way, the special will end with the father and daughter being reunited.

Joseph Kroll, executive director of the

North American Council on Adoptable Children, called the idea "repulsive." He said his own 29-year-old daughter is searching for her birth father.

"If someone were to try doing that to my daughter, what I consider to be abuse, I would not behave appropriately," Kroll said.

Producers have already filmed six "Who's Your Daddy?" episodes, although Fox has only scheduled one of them for air at this point. Hallock said participants were sought through ads that made it clear the solicitation was part of a TV production.

All the participants felt it was a positive experience, said Kevin Healey, another executive producer.

Charles Barkley makes a Supreme Court visit

BY GINA HOLLAND
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court's solemn atmosphere was broken Tuesday as usually subdued workers snapped at attention, riveted by a guest in the cafeteria.

What legal giant could create such a scene? None. It was former basketball star Charles Barkley, who stopped by to visit an old friend, Justice Clarence Thomas.

Barkley patiently posed for pictures and signed autographs for giddy court employees.

The notoriously outspoken Barkley, considered a possible candidate for Alabama governor someday, was polite and politician-like.

Famous people are often spotted in the court, ranging from the justices themselves to well-known lawyers and big-name television journalists. None got the rock-star treatment of Barkley.

The nearly 6-foot-5 former forward — who played for Philadelphia, Phoenix and Houston before retiring in 1999 — was sprawled at a table just a few feet

from the cafeteria checkout for a half-hour or so while word spread through the Supreme Court building and the crowd of admirers grew.

Barkley, a member of the original U.S. Olympic basketball "Dream Team" in 1992 who in 1996 was named one of the National Basketball Association's 50 greatest players, accommodated his fans before heading upstairs to Thomas' office.

Barkley and Thomas are both from the South — Barkley comes from Alabama and Thomas from Georgia — and share a passion for basketball.

A basketball court is located in a secluded area on the Supreme Court building's top floor. It's not listed in tourist information and is closed to visitors.

Known informally as the "highest court in the land," it is used for games between law clerks and court employees — and, occasionally, justices.

Thomas has not been a regular player since tearing his Achilles tendon during a game on the court. Barkley can sympathize. He ruptured a knee tendon in 1999.

Evolution in schools going back to court

Knight Ridder Newspapers

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Almost 80 years after the trial of Tennessee biology teacher John Scopes launched the landmark battle between science and religion, a lawsuit filed in Pennsylvania on Tuesday might reopen national debate over the teaching of evolution.

Two civil liberties groups, representing 11 parents in a community 25 miles southwest of here, sued the Dover Area School District seeking to block its introduction next month of "intelligent design" in the science curriculum.

The suit, which contends that the teaching of intelligent design violates the constitutional separation of church and state, is believed to be the first of its kind.

The intelligent design theory, first advanced in the late 1980s, holds that the universe is so complex that a supernatural force must be at work.

The suit, filed in U.S. District Court by the ACLU of Pennsylvania and Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, argues that intelligent design is "neither scientific nor a theory in the scientific sense; it is an inherently religious argument."

In October, the Dover school board voted to require ninth-grade biology teachers to read a statement that Darwin's theory, that life evolved through a process of natural selection, is "not fact" and that "gaps in the theory exist for which there is no evidence." The directive is scheduled to go into effect in January.

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FACES

Carlton blazes own path to musical glory

BY NEKESA MUMBI MOODY
The Associated Press

NEW YORK

It's hard to imagine a more pop debut than Vanessa Carlton's.

Her piano-infused "A Thousand Miles" became an anthem of 2002, garnered her three Grammy nominations and helped her sell more than 2 million copies of "Be Not Nobody," her first album.

But as she releases her sophomore set, "Harmonium," Carlton prefers to define herself as out of the mainstream.

"I am kind of an alternative to kind of the very popular hip-hop stuff and other really mainstream pop artists," says the 24-year-old singer-songwriter, sitting in a studio. "I'm an alternative to the Simpson girls."

Carlton has done well by defining herself as the alternative to commercial pop, with her first album, the brunette was cast as one of the emerging anti-Britleys — female artists who write their own material, play their own instruments and reject the role of pop's overexposed vixen.

Carlton hopes to cast herself next as a career artist, instead of the hot singer of the moment.

Q: You were among a rising group of female singer-songwriters considered an alternative to Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera. Do you feel you were lumped in with other artists?

A: I did, but I thought that the trend of that time probably helped propel me forward.

When you're part of a trend, it tends to be easier to kind of break

through, and at this point now I'm just kind of standing on my own and it feels nice to be one of the few people that are doing what I am attempting to do.

I'm not really scared by it at all. To walk the bold path is not something that I'm afraid of, and if I'm releasing a song to radio and it's the only song on radio that sounds that way, that to me is a plus as opposed to me being concerned that I'm not fitting a preconceived mold.

Q: You say this record is more serious — why?

A: It's a darker-themed album. (When) you're a writer and you're 16 and 17 years old, you kind of like to go through a diary stage where you're kind of mostly narcissistic and dealing with yourself, and writing for me is a very selfish thing, where as it's solely about comforting myself.

And just as you grow up, you kind of start to absorb your environment in a different way, you develop a different perspective.

Q: What was the whirlwind like when you were nominated for the Grammys?

A: It kind of went over my head ... It was almost too easy.

was working for years and suddenly it came, and as much as someone could say, "You worked for four years, five years, and it all comes and it feels so good" — it's all going at such a fast pace that it doesn't feel easy, it just feels like it's whipping through your fingers as it's happening and there's no real way to absorb it or appreciate it, and that was really what was happening.

Now I don't think it would be like that. (But) the Grammys to me was dealing with the battery



Singer Vanessa Carlton poses at the Hit Factory music studios in New York.

pack strapped around my leg, making sure I could hear my vocal and the piano at the same time.

Q: Did you enjoy it?

A: Being at the actual Gram-

mys? No. I enjoyed the attention ... but it's one of the most stressful awards. I couldn't even get a cup of water backstage.

Q: Do you think this album is more of a mature record?

A: I think the album is a reflection of a more womanly point of view on the world. There was something kind of innocent and girlish about the first record ... But with that said, I tend to have a very wholesome image. I don't really strip or do anything like that.

Q: You haven't done the Maxim layout?

A: (Laughs) No, and I don't have a desire to, because the bottom line is I feel womanly and sexy and confident ... I feel like taking off all of your clothes [is] doing it to get attention from men, and I don't feel like I need to give for it.

I feel sexy in pajamas. I think as a woman growing up in this society, it's really easy, dangerously easy, to kind of fall into the trapings of what your image should be, how you should look.

The expectation for women has gotten about out of hand. I try to separate myself from the whole thing.

Q: How do you not fall into that? So many women have vowed to never do it, and then a few months later they're showing skin.

A: Well, I think that I'm perfectly happy that my brain is bigger than my boobs, and that's quite all right with me.

There's a pressure to stay thin and pretty, but I don't feel a pressure to be naked or get a boob job or anything like that. I'm sure I would sell more records ... but I couldn't care less. I have friends and family and a boyfriend, and I don't have to prove myself to anyone.

And with that said, I definitely have one of the better [behinds] in the music industry, and no one will see it because I'm sitting at the piano!

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Elton John calls in sick for concert

Singer Elton John canceled a second British concert because of a throat infection.



John

John, 57, blamed the infection for the cancellation of his planned show Sunday at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Center in Glasgow — the fourth concert in a tour of Britain. Two nights earlier, he had canceled a concert in Nottingham.

"I've been doing all that I can to try to get my voice back and I've seen a throat specialist again today and he's advised that it would be foolish to go ahead with tonight's show," John said in a statement.

Earlier this month, the rock legend was honored with a star-studded tribute at the Kennedy Center.

Bob Marley for Jamaica's No. 1 hero

He's received countless musical accolades, inspired millions with his message of "one love" and is even hailed as a prophet by some.

Now, members of Bob Marley's estate are lobbying the government to proclaim the dreadlocked reggae singer a national hero, Jamaica's highest honor.

Marley died of cancer in Miami in 1981 at 36, and

some of his family members have lived in South Florida.



Marley

"Anywhere you go in the world the first thing people think of when they hear Jamaica is Bob Marley," said Jacqueline Knight-Campbell, who is organizing the campaign for the Bob Marley Foundation.

"He has inspired so many people with his songs so it's time for us to step up and take Bob's recognition to a higher level."

The foundation is also seeking to have his birthday — Feb. 6 — declared a national holiday.

Only seven Jamaican nationals have been named national heroes, including black civil rights leader Marcus Garvey and former Prime Minister Alexander Bustamante.

Country singer recovering

Veteran country singer Little Jimmy Dickens has been released from a hospital where he was treated for pneumonia.

A Grand Ole Opry spokeswoman said Dickens was discharged after nearly a week and sent home with orders to rest. He will turn 84 Sunday.

His hits include "May the Bird of Paradise Fly Your Nose," "A Sleepin' at the Foot of the Bed" and "Out Behind the Barn." Stories and photos from The Associated Press

YOUR MONEY

Blockbuster to end late fees in 2005

Movie giant to offer grace period, then charge full purchasing price

BY DAVID KOENIG

The Associated Press

DALLAS — Blockbuster Inc., the nation's biggest movie rental company, says it will eliminate late fees on movies and movies as of Jan. 1 — but if you keep them too long, you buy them.

The offer announced Tuesday suggests that Blockbuster is still struggling to blunt the competitive threat from Netflix Inc. and cable.

The company had expected to earn \$250 million to \$300 million in operating profits next year from its unpopular late fees but believes it can make up for the lost income with increased volume — betting that customers, no longer worried about late fees, will rent more movies and games. "We had to end with late fees," said chairman and chief executive John Antonic. "It's the source of jokes on late-night TV. It's still anecdotally, and in some sense really, the biggest negative to Blockbuster ... There were customer transactions that never happened because of late fees."

Blockbuster shares rose 40 cents, or 4.6 percent, to close at \$9.20 on the New York Stock Exchange. That is near the lower end of their 52-week trading range of \$6.50 to \$9.37.

Blockbuster faces new competition on several fronts — cheap DVDs in discount stores, mail-delivery service from Netflix, and movies on demand from cable TV operators — none of which come with late fees. Dallas-based Blockbuster said it tested dropping late fees in several cities over the past year and found that retail sales of movies increased.

Blockbuster customer Susan Murray, who raced to a Dallas store just before noon Tuesday to avoid a charge, welcomed the planned elimination of late fees. Murray said she gets dinged a late fee almost every time she rents — \$11.50 for two movies last week alone — including occasions when she was sure she had beat the deadline.

"It was going to cancel (Blockbuster) and get Netflix," Murray said. "I decided a couple days ago that was it. Now I'll have to reconsider."

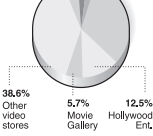
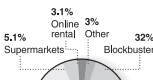
But rivals claimed that Blockbuster wasn't really eliminating late fees, only giving customers more time before incurring even larger penalties.

Blockbuster said due dates at its 4,500 U.S. stores would remain one week for games and two movies or one week for movies. The com-

Video rental market

Blockbuster announced Tuesday that it will eliminate late fees on in-store rentals as of Jan. 1. In 2003, Blockbuster controlled 32 percent of the video rental market.

2003 video rental market share



SOURCE: "The Future of Video Rentals," Adams Media Research

pany said it would give customers a one-week grace period at no charge, starting on New Year's Day.

Renters who keep the movies or games beyond the grace period will be charged for purchasing the DVD or tape at Blockbuster's full retail price, minus the rental fee, the company said. If they return the movie or game in the next 30 days, they will get a refund for the purchase but will be charged a restocking fee of \$1.25, the company said.

Reed Hastings, CEO of Los Gatos, Calif.-based Netflix, said Blockbuster's move would backfire because of the potential of being charged for purchasing a late DVD.

Failed brakes halt confidence in car

Dear Tom and Ray:

You guys really make me laugh. So now you know that the other person is out there laughing with you! I have a 2003 Windstar with about 16K miles. Last Saturday, my wife took my car to watch the Mummies parade in North Wildwood, N.J. As she approached a stop sign, the brakes failed her. The pedal went to the floor. She was not going very fast and was able to bring the car to a stop without hitting anything. She immediately turned the car off, and

Click and Clack

Tom and Ray Magliozzi

the brake returned (the pedal returned to its normal position and the brakes worked). The brakes have been working normally ever since. I checked under the hood, saw no leaks, and the master-cylinder reservoir was full. The brake pads look good. We took it to a Ford dealership (they kept it for a day), and the mechanic said that the brakes were OK, that he made an adjustment in the hydraulics. Tom and Ray, now I have lost confidence in the brakes. Any suggestions? Should I expect failure again? Should I trade it in? Could it be a bad master cylinder or anti-lock brake system? How can I ever have confidence in the brakes again?

Tom: No, can't. Gene: Gene, Calm-beside-Nettles said Blockbuster's move would backfire because of the potential of being charged for purchasing a late DVD.

Tom: You can't, Gene. At least not until somebody gives you a credible explanation for why they failed. No one has done that yet.

Ray: There is no "good" reason you can make to the hydraulics, so he was just trying to get rid of you with that one.

Tom: I may think of a few possible explanations for what happened. The most likely is that your wife accidentally drove all the way to the Mummies parade with the parking brake applied — or, more likely, partially applied. That would mean that the brakes were being applied the whole time she was driving, even though her foot wasn't on the brake pedal. This overheated the brakes, which boiled the brake fluid, which led to the brake failure.

RAY: Then, when she shut off the engine and let things cool down, the brakes returned to normal. And we would assume that after that, she released the parking brakes.

TOM: How do you prove that's what happened? I guess you have to put her under the klieg lights and interrogate her.

RAY: Actually, you might do better just asking her whether it's possible. You said it was your car she was driving.

RAY: In fact, I recently drove halfway to Montreal with the parking brake partially applied in one of our brand-new test cars. I won't mention whose car it was, because I don't want Chrysler on our case again!

TOM: A related cause of intermittent brake failure is a faulty power-brake booster. That creates a situation similar to leaving the parking brake on. It fails to release the brakes entirely. So, it also causes brake failure by overheating the brake fluid. If that's the case, it could happen again.

RAY: If it's not either of those, then it's probably a bad master cylinder, which would need to be replaced.

Tom: So, unless your wife fusses up to perhaps having seen the red "parking brake" light on when she was driving that day, dealer, talk to the manager of the service department and tell him that you need a more definitive explanation before you can confidently drive this any more.

RAY: Ask him to keep it and drive it home for a few days. Tell him to take his family out in it and see if he can get the problem to recur. If you notice a sudden deer-in-the-headlights look when you make this suggestion, you'll know you've made your point. Good luck, Gene.

Get a question about cars? Write to Click and Clack in care of this column, or e-mail them by visiting the Car Talk section of cars.com on the World Wide Web, distributed by King Features Syndicate Inc.

TUESDAY'S MARKET SUMMARY

INDEXES					
	52-week	Low	High	Net Chg	% YTD 52-wk
Dow Jones Industrial	10,753.15	9,702.40	11,000.00	+18.15	+0.17
S&P 500	1,418.05	1,242.46	1,496.00	+12.07	+0.84
Nasdaq Composite	2,352.30	2,041.11	2,400.00	+21.62	+0.92
Dow Jones Indus. Averages	7,108.61	6,171.85	7,400.00	+12.19	+0.17
NYSE Composite	1,417.41	1,118.28	1,496.00	+12.07	+0.84
NYSE Indus. Averages	1,758.92	1,496.00	1,800.00	+11.54	+0.65
Nasdaq Composite	1,198.77	1,066.72	1,240.00	+12.07	+0.92
Dow Jones Indus. Averages	549.29	547.00	550.00	+0.21	+0.04
S&P 500	644.84	518.90	650.00	+12.07	+0.84
Nasdaq Composite	1,179.10	1,066.72	1,240.00	+12.07	+0.92

NYSE					
Most Active (\$1 or more)	Most Active (\$1 or more)	Most Active (\$1 or more)	Most Active (\$1 or more)	Most Active (\$1 or more)	Most Active (\$1 or more)
IBM	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Microsoft	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Amazon.com	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Google	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Yahoo	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Oracle	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Microsoft	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Amazon.com	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Google	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Yahoo	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Oracle	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Microsoft	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Amazon.com	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Google	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Yahoo	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Oracle	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Microsoft	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Amazon.com	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Google	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Yahoo	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Oracle	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Microsoft	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Amazon.com	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Google	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Yahoo	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Oracle	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Microsoft	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Amazon.com	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Google	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Yahoo	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Oracle	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Microsoft	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Amazon.com	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Google	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Yahoo	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Oracle	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Microsoft	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Amazon.com	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Google	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Yahoo	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Oracle	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Microsoft	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Amazon.com	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Google	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Yahoo	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Oracle	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Microsoft	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Amazon.com	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Google	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Yahoo	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Oracle	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Microsoft	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Amazon.com	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Google	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Yahoo	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Oracle	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Microsoft	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Amazon.com	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Google	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Yahoo	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Oracle	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Microsoft	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Amazon.com	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Google	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Yahoo	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Oracle	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Microsoft	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Amazon.com	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Google	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Yahoo	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Oracle	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Microsoft	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Amazon.com	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Google	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Yahoo	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Oracle	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Microsoft	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Amazon.com	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Google	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Yahoo	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Oracle	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Microsoft	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Amazon.com	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Google	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Yahoo	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Oracle	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
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Amazon.com	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Google	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Yahoo	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Oracle	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Microsoft	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Amazon.com	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Google	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Yahoo	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Oracle	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Microsoft	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Amazon.com	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Google	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Yahoo	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Oracle	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
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Google	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Yahoo	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Oracle	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Microsoft	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Amazon.com	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Google	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Yahoo	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Oracle	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100
Microsoft	Vol 10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100	10,100

FRIDAY EVENING / DECEMBER 17, 2004

MOVIES

• SPORTS

J	6PM	6:30	7PM	7:30	8PM	8:30	9PM	9:30	10PM	10:30	11PM	11:30
6	AFN-P •ESPNs Pacific Report	King of the Hill The guys go back to school (CC)	The Apprentice (CC)	Headline News Judge Judy (CC)	Today (CC)							
7	AFN-AT (5:46) Oprah Winfrey (CC)	(3:55) Guiding Light (CC)	(1:17) General Hospital (CC)	Headline News Judge Judy (CC)	Today (CC)							
8	NEWS Hardball with Chris Matthews	The O'Reilly Factor (CC)	PrimeTime Thursday (CC)	Headline News Judge Judy (CC)	Today (CC)							
9	SPTS •(5:00) College Basketball Ohio State at Texas Tech (Taped)	•SportsCenter	NBA Basketball Cleveland Cavaliers at Detroit Pistons. From the Palace of Auburn Hills in Auburn Hills, Mich.	Headline News Judge Judy (CC)	Today (CC)							
10	SPTS The Simpsons A judge empancates a bully (CC)	Everybody Loves Raymond A judge empancates a bully (CC)	Charmed "Spin City" The Spider Demon kidnaps and cocoons Piper and turns Chris into a spider. (CC)	Boston Public "Chapter Thirty-Nine" Bonnie catches a student in a criminal act; two girls chat online with a man. (CC)	Blue Planet: Seas of Life "Frozen Seas" Animals living in bitterly cold climates. (CC)	Friends Ross' lunch notes cause a wedding (CC)	Seinfeld A trip to India for a wedding (CC)	The Daily Show (CC)	Blind Date (CC)			
11	AFN-AT SpongeBob SquarePants (CC)	Rugrats Angelica makes Santa quit (E) (CC)	All Grown Up Dave Barbarian (CC)	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
12	AFM (10:5) *** "For Keesee" (1988, Drama) Mel Gibson, Randall Batinkoff, Ken Leith. Maria: A career-minded high-school senior becomes pregnant. PG-13 (CC)	•Lucy (2003, Drama) Lucie Arnaz, Ken Leith. Maria: A career-minded high-school senior becomes pregnant. PG-13 (CC)	World Traveler (2001, Drama) Billy Crystal, Julianne Hurlst. A funeral for a road trip to discover a (Swabian-English) H (CC)	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
24	PBS Dragon Tales "Pony for Change" (E)	Zoom Game Show (E) (CC) (DVS)	The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer (N) (CC)	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
25	SHOW (18) *** "Barbershop" (2002, Comedy) Ice Cube, Anthony Anderson, Cedric the Entertainer. A barbershop owner considers selling his establishment. PG-13 (CC)	•Barbershop (2002, Comedy) Ice Cube, Anthony Anderson, Cedric the Entertainer. A barbershop owner considers selling his establishment. PG-13 (CC)	•Barbershop (2002, Comedy) Ice Cube, Anthony Anderson, Cedric the Entertainer. A barbershop owner considers selling his establishment. PG-13 (CC)	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
26	A&E City Confidential "Frisco Fold Inheritance" A California businessman and two family members are slain.	•City Confidential "Frisco Fold Inheritance" A California businessman and two family members are slain.	•City Confidential "Frisco Fold Inheritance" A California businessman and two family members are slain.	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
28	DISC To Be Announced	To Be Announced	To Be Announced	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
29	TFC Wazz Up Wazz Up	Star Circle Guest	Bids Si Mister, Bids Si Mister	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
30	CNN+ Larry King Live (CC)	CNN World News	World Sport	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
31	GOLF •U.S. Open Golf Highlights Jim Furyk wins the 2003 U.S. Open.	•U.S. Open Golf Highlights Jim Furyk wins the 2003 U.S. Open.	•U.S. Open Golf Highlights Jim Furyk wins the 2003 U.S. Open.	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
32	TLC Clean Sweep "Yours, Mine & Finally Yours" Gary just moved with Jennifer.	Clean Sweep "Yours, Mine & Finally Yours" Gary just moved with Jennifer.	Clean Sweep "Yours, Mine & Finally Yours" Gary just moved with Jennifer.	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
33	TOON Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends	Teen Titans	Powerpuff Girls!	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
35	ANPL The Crocodile Hunter Steve comes face-to-face with Komodo dragons, the world's largest lizard. (CC)	Most Extreme: Bitters Mosquito, vampire bats; Komodo dragon. (CC)	Venom ER A sideview victim's bite is more serious than thought at first. (CC)	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
36	COM 100 Greatest Stand-Ups (Part 5 of 5) (CC)	The Daily Show Stephen King (CC)	Mad TV "When Harry Met Sally" and "Free Willy" spin off from the trans-Atlantic species. (CC)	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
40	NGC-A Cynical!	Sneak Wranglers Swimming with deadly snakes (CC)	World's Wildest Police Videos (CC)	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
41	SFXE Remington Steele (CC)	Body of Evidence: Cops (CC)	CSI: Crime Scene Investigation "Falciano's Moment" (CC)	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
44	BET 106 & Park: BET's Top 10 Live! 1 performance.	BET.com Count-Down Live! 1 performance.	CSI: Crime Scene Investigation "Falciano's Moment" (CC)	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
46	COURT Hollywood Heat	Body of Evidence: Cops (CC)	CSI: Crime Scene Investigation "Falciano's Moment" (CC)	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
48	STR-WL The Simpsons (CC)	The Drew Carey Show (CC)	Star News Focus Friends (CC)	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
50	LIFE The Golden Girls Dorothy and Sophia head into a trip.	The Golden Girls Dorothy and Sophia head into a trip.	CSI: Crime Scene Investigation "Falciano's Moment" (CC)	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
51	ABC/AF 7th Heaven "Life and Death" Eric tells to convince Chandler's father to see him before he dies. (CC)	Rudolph's Shiny New Year	The Christmas Tree (1997, Drama) Matt Rogers, Bill Switzer, Rob Stewart. A store clerk gets every man on her extravagant wish list. (CC)	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
53	HIST Dead Men's Secrets "Rackin' Nasty Gold" Gold from decorated continents funds the war machine. (CC)	Dead Men's Secrets "Rackin' Nasty Gold" Gold from decorated continents funds the war machine. (CC)	Heavy Metal "A-10 Tankbuster" The A-10 Tankbuster provides close air support for U.S. ground forces. (CC)	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
54	STR-WL (4:45) "South Kensington" (1988, Suspense) Bruce Willis, Bonnie Bedelia, Reginald VelJohnson. An officer single-handedly takes on a band of terrorists. (CC)	CSI: Crime Scene Investigation "Falciano's Moment" (CC)	CSI: Crime Scene Investigation "Falciano's Moment" (CC)	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
56	ADV T Return to Eternity	Height of Courage: The Norman Vaughan Story	Bornes: Biting the Headhunter Trail Two mountain bikers tour an ancient headhunter trail in the Amazon. (CC)	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
59	MTV Diary "Jessica Biel" (You've Got a Friend)	The Real World "Philadelphia" (CC)	The Real World "Philadelphia" (CC)	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			
60	NICK SpongeBob SquarePants (CC)	Rugrats Angelica makes Santa quit (E) (CC)	Scaredy Camp	Jimmy Neutron Drake & Josh (CC)	That's So Raven Sabrina-Witch (CC)	Switched (CC)	Radio-ROCK (CC)	The Cosby Show (CC)	Home Improve. (CC)			

JAPAN TV

Morning

7:30 Japan (12)

5:00 News (6)

Evening

7:00 NHK News (1)

8:30 Japan Rugby (42)

9:30 U.S. Movie (1986): Cobra (15:14)

10:00 News (12)

10:50 News (12)

11:50 News (12)

12:45 News (12)

1:45 News (12)

2:45 News (12)

3:45 News (12)

4:45 News (12)

5:45 News (12)

6:45 News (12)

JAPAN TV-B57

Morning

6:15 World News

7:15 World News

8:15 World News

9:15 World News

10:15 World News

11:15 World News

12:15 World News

1:15 World News

2:15 World News

3:15 World News

4:15 World News

5:15 World News

6:15 World News

7:15 World News

8:15 World News

9:15 World News

8:15 News Today: World

9:15 News Today: World

10:15 News Today: World

11:15 News Today: World

12:15 News Today: World

1:15 News Today: World

2:15 News Today: World

3:15 News Today: World

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OPINION

U.S. military equipped with outspoken GIs

Edward Lee Pitts deserves a Pulitzer Prize. And Thomas Wilson should get a Silver Star.

Pitts is the reporter from the Chattanooga (Tenn.) Times Free Press

who last week infiltrated Donald Rumsfeld's troops-only "town meeting" in Kuwait and planted a question about the insufficiency of defensive equipment in the Iraqi theater.

A Tennessee National Guardsman, Wilson, served as Pitts' mouthpiece. He stood up and demanded to know if the secretary

of defense was aware that some American units had to scavenge for protective armor and what did Rumsfeld plan to do about it.

A Pentagon spokesman initially denounced Pitts and Wilson for breaking the rules of journalistic engagement. But the question hit a nerve and drew cheers from the audience.

Most of these meet-the-secretary events are meaningless morale sessions, but this was different. Wilson's fellow Guardsmen cheered him not only for raising a troubling question but for having the brass to do it.

Rumsfeld, to his credit, handled the question pretty well. His reply — you go to war with the army you have, not the army you'd like to have — was blunt but honest. So was his admission that no amount of

armor will save every single soldier.

Rumsfeld's critics are now assailing him for sounding crass. But a certain amount of hardheadedness goes with his job, especially in wartime. Rumsfeld is in charge of spending American lives in the pursuit of victory. That's a heavy burden.

Hand-wringing and false tears don't help. Still, there is a limit to even Rumsfeld's candor. The secretary of defense didn't say, as he could rightly have, that the U.S. Army sends its troops into combat with fantastic technological advantages. Anyone who was a soldier even a decade ago marvels at the equipment American soldiers have, from night-fighting gear to computers, from protective Kevlar to state-of-the-art scopes. When the U.S. military goes up against Arab insurgents — or the Iraqi army — there is simply no comparison.

This is as it should be. War isn't a game. Fairness isn't a goal.

On the contrary, the whole point is to gain an overwhelming advantage.

Despite its shortcomings, the Pentagon has largely done that job. By any standard short of perfection, American troops are astonishingly well-provisioned and equipped — a fact attested to by the relative ease with which they win their battles.

It's worth remembering, though, that great hardware is not the only explanation for American military superiority. Democracy, it turns out, is not simply the most pleasant form of government. It is also the most ruthlessly efficient — especially in wartime.

Within hours of the Rumsfeld town meet-



ing, the entire American media set up a hue and cry about what's missing in the Iraqi theater. After initial spluttering about a lack of resources, the Pentagon (inspired no doubt by an embarrassed secretary of defense) started talking about stepping up production of armored vehicles at home and greater attention to the safety of troops in the field.

This kind of public-driven improvement doesn't take place in the armies of America's adversaries, which are led by friends

and relatives of dictators. Loyalty, not competence, is what counts in those armies. Soldiers who ask questions are punished. Soldiers like Thomas Wilson who ask them publicly are shot (if they're lucky). Same for cheeky reporters like Edward Lee Pitts.

Guys like Pitts and Wilson keep the Pentagon and the generals honest. In the end, they are a source of American military strength no less than the extra armored vehicles that will — thanks to them — be moving down the assembly line for Iraq.

Zev Chafets is a New York Daily News columnist.

With Internet, 'permanent record' no idle threat

BY EDWARD WASSERMAN

It was a little matter, but the implications were big. Some years ago a student at a small college was interviewed for an undergraduate reporting project on weapons. (Both student and school shall go unnamed here.) He was brash and foolish, and he bragged about his collection, which he liked to keep close at hand. He was quoted at length; he sounded like a jerk. The article was posted on a departmental Web site.

Now, years later, it can be unearthed instantly by anybody with Internet access. If you Google the kid's name, the first entry that pops up makes him sound like Travis Bickel from "Taxi Driver." Hire him! A prospective employer would more likely call Security. So the alumnus appealed to the school to help.

Which it can't, even if it wanted to. The feathers are out of the pillow, the footprints out of the tube. An incalculable number of copies of that item lurk on the Internet. There's even a vast Invisible Web where dead Web sites live on. Expunging the record isn't an option.

Such is the Internet's underside: an incapacity to forget. In cyberspace, information has two qualities that it has never quite had before: It is imperishable — and it is universally accessible. The combination has a disturbing potential that the usual means of news media, which create so much information, never anticipated.

For reasons of law and custom, the media traditionally insist on a fairly clean distinction between public and private. They accept restrictions on peering in the private sphere. But they insist that they're entitled to report on anything that's "public."

Fortunately, that's a right, not a reality. As a practical matter, much of what's techni-

cally public remains effectively private — from your age to the juicy details of your divorce, from how many cars you own to what your house is worth. Even police records: But a tiny fraction of arrests go unpublished to the wider world. Maybe that's bad. But maybe that makes it easier for people to go forth and sin no more.

So we're used to dwelling, most of us, in a zone of relative obscurity, and not just with personal data. Within limits we could mess up — streak across campus, tear down the goalposts, get into a barroom punch-up — and even if it made the local paper, our sins would be soon forgotten. That "permanent record" we were warned about has largely been a phantom.

Not any longer. The comfort of relative obscurity is giving way to the glare of immediate accessibility.

Elements can be saved. Governments can enact Web-access rules to public databases.

Colleges can decide that the young should be able to make fools of themselves with impunity, and withhold student chronicles from the Net.

But the news media exist to make things public. The real challenge is theirs, because the Internet fundamentally challenges some of the basics of what news is.

Take the assumption that news is about informing people right now.

No longer. Now news is indistinguishable from archive. With every deadline, newsrooms are building a globally accessible store of information that's here for keeps. It better be right. That means mistakes must be fixed zealously, no matter how long ago the original report ran, even if nobody complains. Those papers may be landfill, but the error is still hanging there in cyberspace, fresh as ever, wrong as can be.

Likewise, consider follow-through: How can you report an arrest without ever noting

that the charges were dropped and the defendant acquitted? Routine neglect like that was tolerable once because we assumed that the matter would soon be forgotten. But nothing is forgotten that way now. On the Internet, that arrested person will remain under a cloud forever.

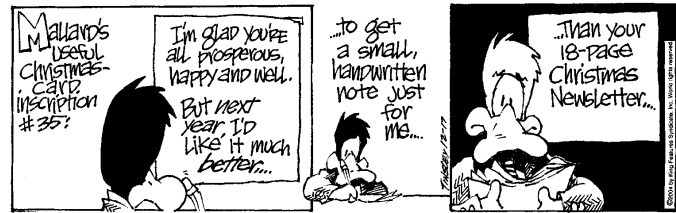
In the disturbing sci-fi movie "Strange Days," technology enables raw experience to be recorded. Not just pictures and sound, but sensation and emotion, can be played back. Our jilted hero keeps replaying — literally reliving — the thrill of a doomed affair. The result is that he never gets over his ex. The memory never fades.

There is a mercy to forgetfulness, just as there is to averting our eyes. The Internet gives us a great deal, but it is destroying both options, and we have no ready way to restore those vanishing mercies.

Edward Wasserman is Knight professor of journalism ethics at the University of Virginia. He wrote this column for The Miami Herald.

Mallard Fillmore

BY BRUCE TINSLEY



Less 'Heart'

AL MONTGOMERY — The state slogan "Heart of Dixie," a source of pride to some and embarrassment to others, is disappearing from Alabama license plates every year.

One-third of the groups that promote distinctive and collegiate license plates now choose to leave the slogan off their tags.

The standard state license plate still has "Heart of Dixie," as required by state law, but it's reduced to letters one-sixteenth of an inch high, printed on a bottom corner.

Former Gov. Don Siegelman, who approved that design, said he wanted it to foster positive images at a time when Alabama was trying to recruit international corporations.

Gas station shooting

MA MEDFORD — A gas station attendant in Medford pulled his own gun on two would-be robbers, shooting and wounding one of the suspects, police said. The second suspect got away.

"It looked like self-defense," Medford police Lt. Paul Covino said of the incident at Fred's Gas Auto Service on Mystic Avenue. He said the gun was registered to the attendant, who was licensed to carry a firearm.

No charges have been filed against the attendant, who was not identified. Police said he fired seven or eight shots at the suspects.

Unconfirmed alcohol

LA GRETTA — Traces of alcohol were detected in the suspected "Jell-O shots" taken to school by a fourth grader — leading to her suspension — but it could have been the result of natural fermentation, a school official said.

School board president Gene Katsanis said the gelatin cannot be retested because it was not refrigerated after being discovered in the student's book bag, Katsanis said. "It will always remain a mystery," he said.

Artifacts wash up

DE LEWES — Visitors to a newly rebuilt beach near Roosevelt Inlet have been finding hundreds of artifacts that could be more than 300 years old. The items were dredged from the bottom of the Delaware Bay. It's not known if the artifacts were from a shipwreck or an early colonial settlement submerged by erosion.

Can't find the birds

HI OLINDA — Bad weather on Maui has prevented wildlife experts from spotting what they believe are the last two po'ouli birds on earth.

The quest to save the rare birds took on new urgency last month with the death of a male bird captured by erosion.

There are believed to be two remaining birds in the wild, but 10 straight days of rain in the Hanalei Natural Area Reserve have hindered scientists' efforts to locate them.

The po'ouli is part of the Hawaiian honeycreeper family and is so unique it has its own genus. It was



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

not discovered until 1973, when a group of University of Hawaii students conducting research on the east slope of Haleakala volcano sighted a bird they had never seen before.

The small, stocky, brown bird has a partial black face described as a bandit's mask.

Targeting drunken drivers

LA BATON ROUGE — The Louisiana Highway Safety Commission will provide \$500,000 to pay for overtime for patrols dedicated to getting drunken drivers off the roads during the holidays. Since 1999, an average of 25 people have been killed in Louisiana highway crashes over the holidays every year. Commission official James Champagne said almost half of the New Year's fatalities and one-third of the Christmas fatalities were alcohol-related.

Free after 12 years

TX FORT WORTH — Texas officials freed a man who spent 12 years in prison after he was wrongfully convicted of molesting a 3-year-old girl.

John Michael Harvey, 40, was released after the state Court of Criminal Appeals ruled 5-4 there was not enough evidence to convict him after his alleged victim recanted more than a decade after he was jailed. Prosecutors have said

they do not plan to seek a new trial.

Harvey missed a lot during 12 years behind bars, including marrying his girlfriend and spending time with his parents, none of whom doubted his innocence.

His relationship with his fiancée fell apart after he was sentenced to 40 years in prison in 1992. After draining most of their life savings to defend him, his father died in 2000 and his mother passed away two years later.

Harvey's nightmare started in 1989, when he returned from a trip and learned police had searched his Bedford apartment. When he went to find out why, authorities arrested him for sexual assault of a child.

He said he was offered a plea deal, but did not want to admit to something he did not do. "If you're guilty, you're worried. Being innocent, I wasn't concerned," Harvey said.

Rooftop crash

CA LOS ANGELES — A small helicopter crashed on the roof of a downtown skyscraper while trying to make an emergency landing, authorities said.

Two men aboard the privately owned aircraft were uninjured in the 10 a.m. crash. The cause remained under investigation.

The two-seat Robinson R-22 was badly damaged when it crashed next to the helipad atop the 54-story Wells Fargo building, city Fire Department spokesman Brian Humphrey said.

There was no fire, and no debris fell from the building, Humphrey said. The National Transportation Safety Board was investigating.

Bush photos controversy

PA LANCASTER — A Democratic city councilman is demanding that a baker remove photos of President Bush from his stand in Lancaster's farmers market, saying the city needs a "healing period" following the bitterly contested election.

City Councilman Nelson Polite asked baker David Stoltz last month to remove the pictures. When Stoltz refused, Polite threatened to try to enact a city ordinance that would ban all political material from public places.

"I just feel that since it was a close election and the city's so divided, that we should have a healing period," Polite told the New Era of Lancaster.

Republican Mayor Charlie Smithgall said potential visitors have told him they will skip the old city in the heart of Amish country because of Polite's statements.

DNA helps rape cases

VA NORFOLK — DNA test results that freed two men imprisoned for rapes they did not commit implicate a convicted rapist already serving three life terms for a 1984 rape.

Aaron Doxide III probably committed the rapes for which Arthur Lee Whitfield and Julius Earl Ruffin served a total of 43 years before being cleared, Commonwealth's Attorney John R. Doyle III said.

Doyle said Doxide will not be prosecuted for the rapes because in both cases key witnesses have died.

Whitfield and Ruffin were convicted of rapes in Norfolk that occurred in 1981.



High-flyin' trick Denny Howard of Carson City, Nev., performs a "Nolley Hand Flip" at the Mills Park skateboard park in Carson City, Nev.



Reflecting on school Candidates for masters and doctoral degrees are reflected in a hallway mirror while preparing for fall commencement at Washington State University in Pullman, Wash.



Emu on the loose Topeka police officers and Shawnee County sheriff's deputies try to catch an emu as it dashes across traffic at an intersection in Topeka, Kan. Unable to find the emu's owner, authorities found it a new home.



Making it festive?

A skeleton in a Santa hat tries to set a holiday mood in the orthopedic-neurologic unit at the Benefits Healthcare hospital in Great Falls, Mont.



Bordering a touchdown

U.S. Border Patrol agent Mark Bazili, center, runs past his blocker, agent Rick Sanchez, left, as he is chased by Alamogordo Department of Public Safety officer Richard Luna, right, during the annual Liniment Bowl at Griggs Complex in Alamogordo, N.M.



Chorale cheer

The Appleton Boychoir performs A Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols at Lawrence Memorial Chapel in Appleton, Wis.



Skiing Santa Claus

Santa skate skis on the Coosa River in Wetumpka, Ala., for the town's annual Christmas on the Coosa festival.

Botulism mystery

FL TALLAHASSEE — Tests to determine the source of the botulism toxin that left four people hospitalized were inconclusive, and it was unclear whether a cosmetic injection caused the paralyzing, potentially fatal illness, officials said.

Investigators suspect the four people, two in New Jersey and two in South Florida, may have been injected with the toxin for cosmetic reasons. All have been hospitalized since the Thanksgiving weekend.

Tests conducted at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta detected botulism toxin type A in blood from three individuals. Specimens were not available for the fourth person.

Florida Health Secretary John Agwunobi noted that the toxin also causes the type of botulism that comes from eating contaminated foods or from having a wound contaminated.

Alcohol-related death

CO DENVER — Colorado State University officials said a 20-year-old student whose body was found appears to be the latest in a string of alcohol-related deaths involving Colorado students this fall.

Bennett Bertoli's body was found in a house across the street from where he lived near the Fort Collins campus.

Police said they were called after attempts to wake him were unsuccessful.

Police have not released the cause of Bertoli's death, but Anne Hudgens, executive director of campus life, told the Fort Collins Coloradoan that it appeared to be alcohol-related. Police did not say where Bertoli had been the night before or how he ended up in the house.

Ex-con won't teach

NY CLINTON — A former leftist radical who spent 16 years in prison for possessing explosives has withdrawn from teaching a college seminar after her hiring sparked protests. Susan Rosenberg made her decision because it was in the best interest of all parties, Hamilton College officials said.

In response to her hiring, prospective students withdrew applications and donors rescinded hundreds of thousands of dollars in pledges, school officials said.

Rosenberg, who earned a master's degree in creative writing while in prison, was to teach a one-month course in January called "Resistance Memoirs: Writing, Identity and Change." She was hired through an on-campus organization that focuses on social justice issues.

Algae researched

FL MARCO ISLAND — Scientists are tracking a 400-square-mile bloom of red tide algae lurking off the Gulf Coast, pointing to it as the likely cause of a mass fish kill and several dolphin deaths at the tip of the Florida peninsula.

"It took almost the size of a small state. It really is a large area of bloom," said Billy Causey, superintendent of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. "I'd have to say that this is the largest red

tide bloom that I have ever seen." A red tide is considered a higher-than-normal concentration of a plant-like microscopic algae. The species that usually contaminates the water during Florida Gulf Coast red tides is called *Karenia brevis*, which produces a toxin that can affect a fish's central nervous system.

Nude Statehouse lamp

VT MONTPELIER — Gov. James Douglas is doing some tidying up in his cabinet and one thing he thinks can go is a table lamp that sometimes makes him red-faced.

The lamp, installed on his desk recently as part of a House restoration project, is a replica of a famous 19th century nude statue that cost \$2,500 and is plugged into an overhead chandelier.

"The governor does not object to the art," said Douglas spokesman Jason Gibbs. "It may, frankly, be awkward to explain why there is a nude Greek slave on the governor's desk to a third-grader."

The lamp is a replica of "The Greek Slave" — a chained female slave crafted by a Vermont artist in 1843.

Machete attack

TX TEXAS CITY — Police are looking for a man accused of attacking a woman with a machete, severing one of her fingers.

Rachael Ornelas was in stable condition at the University of Texas Medical Branch following surgery.

The 42-year-old woman had called emergency dispatchers, pleading for help, detective Brian Goetschius of the Texas City Police Department said. Emergency medical service workers and police found her covered in blood at her apartment.

Police recovered a large machete and issued a warrant for the arrest of a 40-year-old man.

New take on remedy

CA SAN FRANCISCO — Combating malaria has been one of the primary goals of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and its latest gift of \$6 million will fund a nonprofit drug company's high-tech take on an ancient Chinese remedy.

Working with a biotechnology company, the San Francisco-based Institute for OneWorld Health is trying to turn the genetic engineering efforts of Jay Keasling of the University of California, Berkeley into an inexpensive and effective drug to fight malaria in the third world.

Keasling is developing a new way to manufacture artemisinin, which is made from finely ground wormwood plants. Chinese first extracted artemisinin from the sweet wormwood for medicinal use more than 2,000 years ago.

Search for GOP leader

IL SPRINGFIELD — Illinois Republicans are searching for a new head of their party after GOP chairman "Judy" Baar Topinka gave them until Jan. 31 to find her replacement. Within the party, fierce ideological bickering has driven a wedge between conservatives and moderates. Democrats control both houses of the Legislature, the governor's mansion and the state Supreme Court.

Stories and photos from wire services

Horoscope

We're days away from the magical winter solstice, and the sparkling qualities of the season are starting to flair. Venus has danced into Sagittarius, igniting wonder in the young and desire in the more mature. There's so much to want this time of year. Mercury retrograde helps with the "make your list and check it twice!" party.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY

(December 17): Your year ahead is filled with romance, easy communication and a firm footing at home. Those feeling the holiday pinch in their wallets this winter will get a much welcome sense of financial stability just in time for tax season. Shopping spree in May and August are fun upgrades to your lifestyle—as long as you plan ahead for them! Your lucky numbers are: 16, 17, 30, 45, and 22.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Tensions arise when your priorities don't match those of your loved ones. The best time for a family talk is over dinner. Topics that are tough to swallow go down easier with something sweet. Stressed spelled backward is desserts!

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Add beauty and balance to your home through the judicious use of color, texture and placement. Books on the art of feng shui can help you harmonize your living space and keep positive energy flowing in the right direction.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21): The future is an infinite succession of nows. Avoid fuzzy thinking and self-deception. Your clear vision today will help build a solid foundation for tomorrow. Quiet your mind to get to the center of what's real.

CANCER (June 22-July 22): A financial situation that's been quietly simmering in the background may become more worrisome, but cut only temporarily. Allow your intuition to guide you to an answer.

Supportive stars help you achieve a more grounded reality.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Reassess your situation. You may realize

you need to throw out the old rule-book and play a whole new game. If you haven't done so already, now is perfect for adjusting your boundaries and setting goals for the coming year.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): A

sparkling opportunity emerges, allowing you to indulge the creative side of yourself, which you've been suppressing for far too long. You like a challenge, but why make things unnecessarily difficult? Take yes for an answer.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23): Beautiful air signs like you are extra sensitive to sound waves. You can lift yourself out of a funk by creating good vibrations. Listen to some uplifting music or birds flying south for the winter.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21): You're being pulled by subtle yet opposing forces. A nurturing, feminine influence quietly urges you to bring something to fruition, while a disruptive, masculine influence helps you make sure your strategy is solid.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Your head and your heart are likely to be in conflict. Your heart will win, so you may as well give in to it! If you've been holding back on telling someone you care, the planets are on your side.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Mother's advice turns out to be right. You are in prime position to benefit greatly through the wise counsel of a female family member or perhaps the clan patriarch. Light a candle in memory of your ancestors.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): You feel as though a woman in your life is trying to pick a fight with you, perhaps over an issue concerning money or prestige. Take the high ground—accept that she still loves you, and forgive her moods.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Make a conscious effort to tune in to your loved one. You'll be rewarded with romance, compassion and more than a little bit of magic. Keep some watercolors and a brush on hand, too—your cup brims with creative inspiration.

Creators Syndicate

Holiday Mathis



Calvin and Hobbes

Jump Start

Zits

Cathy

Hi and Lois

Beetle Bailey

Red and Rover

Better or Worse



Peanuts



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Foxrot



B.C.



Baby Bites



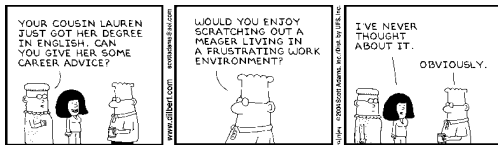
Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



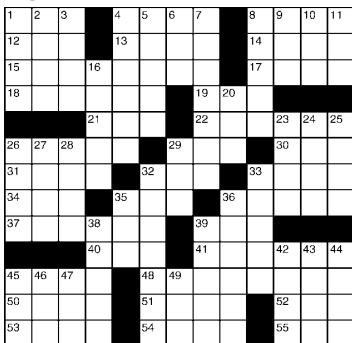
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



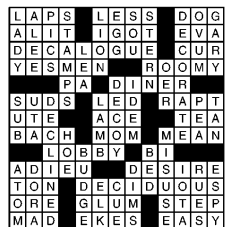
Across

- 1 Computer key
- 4 Kind of palm
- 8 Comedian
- 12 Animation frame
- 13 Oklahoma city
- 14 Vicinity
- 15 Delightful
- 17 Nibble away
- 18 Go up against
- 19 Tackle moguls
- 21 Theatergoers' needs, for short
- 22 Holy
- 26 A place to
- 19 Across
- 29 Attention getter
- 30 Acapulco gold
- 31 Information
- 32 Regis' wife
- 33 Musical based on "La Boheme"

Down

- 1 Canyon comeback
- 2 Leak slowly
- 3 Put your hands together
- 4 Admits
- 5 Wing, maybe
- 6 Hodges of baseball lore
- 7 Homer's story
- 8 Prestidigitiation
- 9 Grecian vessel
- 10 Meadow
- 11 Ally McBeal's field
- 15 Picked a winner?
- 20 Bandleader
- 23 Kyser
- 23 Some deer
- 24 Sea eagle
- 25 They're often connected
- 26 Dumbfound
- 27 One's performances
- 28 Pithy saying (Abbr.)
- 29 Explanation
- 32 "Holy cow!"
- 33 Less commonplace
- 35 "CSI" evidence
- 36 Archimedes' outcry
- 38 Dome home
- 39 Earthy pigment
- 42 Relinquish
- 43 Access to
- 44 Rapunzel
- 44 "Born Free"
- 45 Lioness
- 45 Cranberry territory
- 46 "What have we here?"
- 47 Humor
- 49 Ball-bearing item

Answer to Previous Puzzle



12-17

CRYPTOQUIP

LH YMKKC BV F WFA
VKCWE HE ZFGKELSEK'W
AFO, S CKYJHE OHB MFZK
LH WFO "LFJK MKFCL!"
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WORDS OF WOE FROM A FAILING DIETIER MIGHT BE "A WAIST IS A TERRIBLE THING TO MIND."
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: L equals T

Press charges against Fiancee

Dear Abby: My fiancee, "Monique," has put me into financial ruin. It's all because of this girl who has been hanging around with "Tracy." Monique's friends have warned her to stay away from Tracy because she's had a new guy and have kids with him.

Abby, the two of them have been kiting money. Monique has also forged my name on my own checks, and sold my personal items — things left to me by a grandparent. For years, she has urged me to press charges.

Monique and I have two children, 3 and 2. I spoke to a lawyer and I will have no problem getting full custody.

Monique is on one year's probation and has to pay restitution because she stole from her employer. She is American; we live in Canada. With all the stuff that's happened, Monique may have to leave the country.

Monique's parents have told me I should press charges.

Dear Abby



Monique wasn't like this until she met Tracy. Should I press charges, or should I just say goodbye, take the kids and go my way? A mutual friend says Monique told her that if I do that, she will forget the kids, and find a new guy and have kids with him.

— **Stressed Out**

In Canada

Dear Stressed Out: I'm glad you wrote and I've pleased to help end your ambivalence.

Listen to your common sense as well as to what Monique's parents are urging you to do.

Protect yourself and the kids. Press charges. Tracy is not responsible for your fiancee's behavior. Your fiancee appears to have no conscience. Jail time won't help her mend her ways, but it will slow her down.

Dear Abby: Last week, we invited a couple for dinner this week. Two days before the party,

I called to confirm the time and they said they'd be here. On the evening of the dinner, they showed up two hours late without even a phone call. They said the husband had to work late. Neither of them offered an apology. We had tried twice to contact them before we finally decided to go ahead and eat. They seemed offended that we did.

Were we wrong to assume they weren't coming? If you haven't heard otherwise, how long should you wait for guests before eating without them?

— **Tired of Waiting in Virginia**

Dear Tired of Waiting: You were not wrong to assume that your guests were no-shows and to have eaten dinner. That they failed to call and inform you that they had been delayed was rude. Thirty minutes is long enough to wait for tardy guests — or less if there's danger the meal will be overcooked.

Letters for this column — with your name and phone number — should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 6940, Los Angeles CA 90069. Readers can write to Abby on the Internet at <http://www.uepress.com/dearabby>. Universal Press Syndicate

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

KANET

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PROWE

NIAMEA

YOTHER

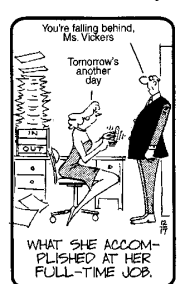
Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answers tomorrow

Yesterday's

Jumbles: NOOSE SURLY JARGON UNFOLD
Answer: A tournament golfer tries to avoid this — THE "FORE" GROUND

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Arglin



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answers tomorrow

Yesterday's

Jumbles: NOOSE SURLY JARGON UNFOLD
Answer: A tournament golfer tries to avoid this — THE "FORE" GROUND

Visions should not be dismissed

Dear Annie: This is in response to "Worried Grandma," whose

12-year-old grandson, "Zach," was having visions. Your immediate advice gave the boy to be hustled off to a neurologist. You have done this child a disservice by your knee-jerk assumption that he has some type of mental problem.

There is another possibility that should not be overlooked: The boy may be psychic. Please take a look at the larger picture, and acknowledge the fact that there are those who have abilities far beyond yours and mine.

— **Paranormal Advocate**
Dear Advocate: Many readers were confused that we recommended a neurologist, so let's clear that up. Visions such as those described by the grandmother could signal that the boy has a brain tumor or other neurological disorder. We felt it was necessary to rule out serious medical concerns, and that is

Annie's Mailbox



why a neurologist was the appropriate referral. We heard from many readers who were convinced the boy's visions should be celebrated. Read on:

From California:

My ESP started at a year of age, and it has been 50-plus years of dealing with others' biased attitudes. If you

feel the urge to refer this family to a doctor, at least refer them to a parapsychologist.

Washington: As a child, I saw stacked translucent colored cubes.

When I was older, I used to see a long-haired female folk singer strumming her guitar. I discovered these were "auras" before my panic attacks. I've been on an anti-anxiety anti-depressant for years now with excellent results.

Madison, Wis.: Zach's visions could be past life regression.

sion. It is wonderful this teen was so intuitive and spiritual that he could remember a previous life without being regressed or hypnotized.

Bainbridge, N.Y.: Zach may have some incredible gifts that he should be taught to cherish. He should be put in touch with a religious community in which he could explore what may be a blossoming spirituality.

East Coast: When I moved into my new home, I had visions of an old woman with a skinny cat. It happened whenever I washed the dishes. I consulted a spiritual medium who told me I was seeing the former owner of the home. Ten years later, I met someone who knew the owner and said she had a cat and loved her kitchen.

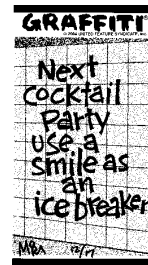
Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Mary Sugar, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to annie@mailbox@cast.net, or write to: Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles CA 90045. Creators Syndicate

Family Circus



12-17
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"Santa can speak any language in the world."



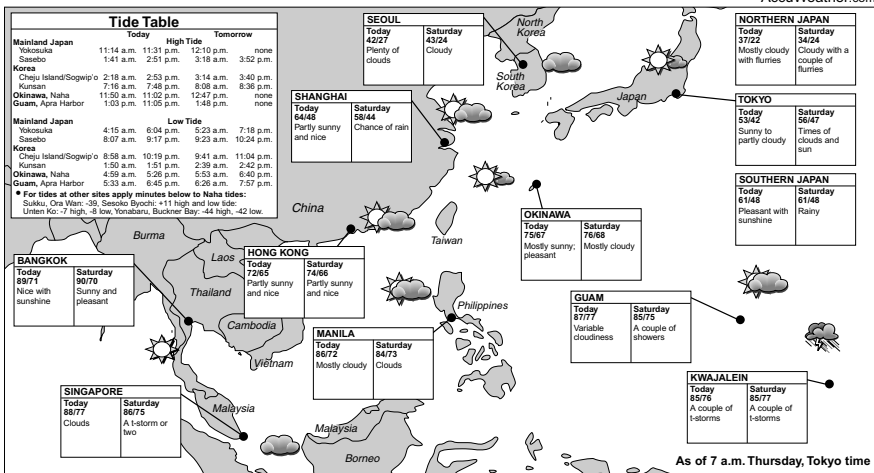
Dennis the Menace



The Pacific Forecast

All forecasts and maps provided by AccuWeather, Inc. © 2004

AccuWeather.com



Extended Forecasts

TOKYO
 Sunday: Rain,
 high 55, low 44.
 Monday: Mostly sunny,
 high 53, low 40.

KADENA
 Sunday: Periods of clouds and
 sunshine,
 high 76, low 67.
 Monday: Partly sunny,
 high 74, low 66.

SEOUL
 Sunday: Periods of clouds and
 sunshine,
 high 36, low 17.
 Monday: Mostly sunny,
 high 29, low 18.

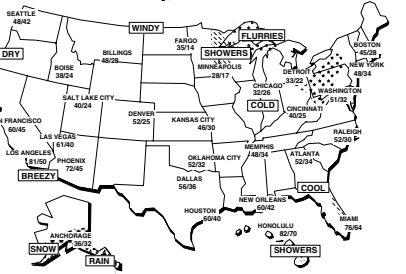
MANILA
 Sunday: Mostly cloudy,
 high 86, low 72.
 Monday: Periods of clouds and
 sunshine,
 high 87, low 73.

HAGATNA
 Sunday: Showers,
 high 83, low 75.
 Monday: Showers,
 high 83, low 75.

Wednesday's USA Temperatures

CITY	HIGH/LOW	CITY	HIGH/LOW
Albuquerque	51/32	Los Angeles	82/52
Amarillo	54/30	Little Rock	45/24
Anchorage	28/26	Louisville	39/25
Ashville	43/16	Miami	69/58
Baltimore	38/19	Milwaukee	42/31
Birmingham	50/24	Nashville	41/22
Bismarck	48/29	New York	34/26
Boise	44/28	Omaha	46/31
Boston	29/23	Orlando	59/44
Brownsville	69/52	Philadelphia	38/22
Buffalo	32/26	Phoenix	72/49
Burlington	20/15	Pittsburgh	31/18
Charleston, SC	46/24	Portland, OR	49/37
Charlotte	42/18	Portland, ME	28/13
Chicago	35/23	Salt Lake City	43/27
Columbus, OH	34/22	St. Louis	46/29
Duluth	36/18	San Antonio	57/40
El Paso	57/34	San Diego	73/54
Hartford	31/13	San Juan	85/74
Helena	47/23	Tampa	60/42
Indianapolis	38/25	Tulsa	49/28
Jacksonville	50/32	Washington	39/24
Kansas City	48/30	Wichita	48/30

Friday, December 17



U.S. Extended Forecast

An area of high pressure will cause frigid air to seep into the Upper Midwest and Great Lakes region Friday. The cold air flowing over lakes Superior and Michigan will trigger lake-effect snow bands along the eastern shores of both lakes. The leading edge of the cold air will be accompanied by a cold front which will bring flurries to New England and lake-enhanced snow showers to western New York and western Pennsylvania. Meanwhile, moisture flowing from the Gulf of Mexico into the western Gulf Coast states will ignite a few showers in eastern Texas and Louisiana. High pressure will continue to dominate much of the West with dry weather. Rain will push into the extreme Northeast.

Friday's Pacific Temperatures

CITY	HIGH/LOW	CITY	HIGH/LOW
Bangkok	89/71	Wakani	57/45
Beijing	32/16	Kadena AB	75/57
Camp Casey	42/26	Kunsan AB	53/39
Christchurch	58/34	Kwajalein	85/76
Diego Garcia	88/77	Manila	86/72
Hagatna	77/67	Misawa AB	34/20
Hanoi	86/73	Osan	45/31
Jacksonville	72/65	Perth	80/58
Honolulu	82/70	Pusan	55/43

Friday's World Temperatures

CITY	HIGH/LOW	CITY	HIGH/LOW	CITY	HIGH/LOW
Acapulco	89/71	Budapest	41/33	Katol	56/28
Athens	58/44	Buenos Aires	82/64	Kiev	35/28
Auckland	62/47	Cairo	60/41	Kuwait	56/30
Baghdad	46/28	Cancun	73/62	London	45/34
Barbados	86/71	Cape Town	78/56	Madrid	54/44
Barcelona	54/49	Geneva	39/34	Mexico City	63/45
Berlin	38/29	Istanbul	49/41	Montreal	31/9
Bermuda	63/55	Jerusalem	56/37	Moscow	91/73
Brussels	39/29	Johannesburg	82/61	Osaka	83/58
				New Delhi	86/67
				Paris	40/32
				Oslo	40/33
				Rio de Janeiro	85/73
				Rome	55/42
				St. Petersburg	36/29
				Stockholm	41/30
				Warsaw	37/29



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SCOREBOARD

FN TV & Radio

Friday

APN-Sports, 230 a.m.—NBA: Utah at Phoenix (6 p.m.).

APN-Sports, 8 p.m.—APN-Radio: Korea, 10 a.m.—NBA: Cleveland at Detroit.

APN-Atlantic, 11 a.m.—College basketball: Ohio State at Texas Tech (NBA).

APN-Sports, 1230 p.m.—NBA: Lakers at Sacramento.

APN-Sports, 3 p.m.—NBA: Inside the NBA, Ohio State at Texas Tech (NBA).

APN-Sports, 8 p.m.—NBA: Cleveland at Detroit (10 p.m.).

Saturday

APN-Sports, 3 a.m.—NBA: Lakers at Sacramento (10 p.m.).

APN-Sports, 830 a.m.—NBA: Denver at Miami.

APN-Sports, 11 a.m.—College football: NCAA Div. I-AA championship, James Madison vs. Montana at Chattanooga, Tenn.

APN-Pacific, Korea, 1230 p.m.—NBA: Washington at Lakers.

APN-Sports, 1230 p.m.—NBA: Phoenix at Seattle (10 p.m.).

APN-Sports, 5 p.m.—College football: NCAA Div. I-AA championship, James Madison vs. Montana at Chattanooga, Tenn.

APN-Sports, 10 p.m.—NBA: Phoenix at Seattle (10 p.m.).

All Times Japan and Korea Standard Time; dates and times delayed occasionally. All times are subject to change. Visit www.mynatnet.com for more information.

College basketball

AP Men's Top 25 ranked

Tuesday

1. Illinois (9-0) did not play. Next: vs. Valparaiso, Sunday.

2. Kansas (6-2) did not play. Next: vs. South Carolina, Saturday.

3. Texas Tech (6-0) did not play. Next: vs. James Madison, Wednesday.

4. North Carolina (7-1) did not play. Next: at UNLV, Saturday.

5. Virginia Tech (7-1) did not play. Next: at Virginia Tech, Sunday.

6. Wake Forest (1-1) did not play. Next: vs. Boston College, Saturday.

7. Duke (7-0) beat Illinois-Chicago 88-55. Next: vs. Oklahoma, Sunday.

8. Syracuse (8-1) did not play. Next: vs. North Carolina, Saturday.

9. Kentucky (7-0) did not play. Next: at No. 13 Louisville, Saturday.

10. Pittsburgh (1-1) did not play. Next: vs. Connecticut, Saturday.

11. North Carolina State (7-0) did not play. Next: vs. Rutgers, Sunday.

12. Louisville (6-1) beat North Carolina A&T 85-61. Next: vs. No. 9 Kentucky, Saturday.

13. Texas (6-1) did not play. Next: vs. Texas-Arlington, Wednesday.

14. Arizona (6-1) did not play. Next: at Marquette, Saturday.

15. Iowa (8-1) did not play. Next: vs. Western Carolina, Saturday.

16. Alabama (8-1) did not play. Next: vs. Tennessee, Saturday.

17. Washington (7-1) did not play. Next: vs. Tennessee, Saturday.

18. Georgia Washington (6-1) did not play. Next: vs. Mississippi State, Saturday.

19. Georgia Washington (6-1) did not play. Next: at Xavier, Saturday.

20. Franklin State (5-2) did not play. Next: vs. Delaware State, Saturday.

21. Gonzaga (7-2) did not play. Next: vs. No. 3 Georgia Tech, Saturday.

22. Maryland (7-2) did not play. Next: vs. Florida State, Sunday.

23. North Carolina (7-1) did not play. Next: vs. Loyola Marymount, Thursday, Dec. 23.

24. Cincinnati (6-0) did not play. Next: vs. Northwestern State, Saturday.

Sierra 78, Youngstown 37, Dec. 407
St. Cloud 83, Utopia 106

SOUTHWEST
Arkansas 76, Incarnate Word 58
Midwestern St. 56, Southwestern 64

WEST
San Jose State 70, Santa Clara 57
San Ross 57, Hayward Payne 73

FAR WEST
Oregon 73, Bethune-Cookman 65
St. Mary's, Cal., San Diego 64

FLORIDA
Florida Tech 70, Santa Clara 57
San Ross 57, Hayward Payne 73

AP Women's Top 25 ranked

Tuesday
1. LSU (9-0) beat No. 13 Minnesota 75-67.

2. North at Southwest Missouri State, Saturday.

3. Stanford (7-0) did not play. Next: at Mississippi State, Saturday.

4. Duke (8-1) did not play. Next: vs. Jacksonville State, Wednesday.

5. Texas Tech (4-2) did not play. Next: at North Texas, Thursday.

6. North Carolina (6-1) did not play. Next: vs. Tennessee, Saturday.

7. More Game (7-1) did not play. Next: at Marquette, Sunday.

8. Connecticut (4-1) did not play. Next: at Louisiana Tech, Wednesday.

9. Tennessee (5-2) did not play. Next: at Louisiana Tech, Wednesday.

10. Ohio State (9-1) did not play. Next: at Ohio State, Saturday.

11. Michigan State (8-1) did not play. Next: vs. Arizona State, Saturday.

12. Texas Tech (5-1) did not play. Next: vs. Arkansas State, Saturday.

13. Minnesota (8-2) lost to No. 1 LSU 75-67. Next: vs. North Carolina, Saturday.

14. Boston College (7-1) did not play. Next: vs. Virginia Tech, Saturday.

15. Georgia (7-3) did not play. Next: at Iowa State, Saturday.

16. UCLA (6-1) did not play. Next: at Illinois, Sunday.

17. Vanderbilt (7-3) did not play. Next: vs. BYU at Malibu, Calif., Monday.

18. Maryland (8-1) did not play. Next: at Mississippi State, Monday.

19. Virginia Tech (7-1) did not play. Next: at Hawaii, Thursday.

20. North Carolina (6-1) did not play. Next: vs. No. 3 Duke at Indianapolis, Saturday.

21. DePaul (6-2) did not play. Next: at North Carolina, Wednesday.

22. Rutgers (5-3) did not play. Next: vs. Clemson, Saturday.

23. Arizona State (7-1) did not play. Next: at New Mexico State, Saturday.

24. Iowa (8-1) did not play. Next: at Drake, Saturday.

25. Kansas State (5-2) did not play. Next: vs. Kansas, Saturday.

Tuesday's women's scores

EAST
Boston 159, Harvard 52

Cabot 47, Butler 45, Connecticut 45

Concordia, N.Y., 60, Nyack 37

Kings Point 70, Mount St. Vincent 62

Philadelphia 84, Mercy, N.Y., 57

Rutgers-Newark 45, Princeton 40

SUNY-Farmington 78, SUNY 33

St. Mary's, Cal., 56, Hunterdon 45

SOUTH
Bethune-Cookman 71, Alabama A&M 59

Guthrie 66, Spaulding 55

Louisiana College 71, LSU-Shreveport 55

Mississippi 89, Ark., Pine Bluff 41

Mississippi 62, Troy 52

North Carolina 88, Florida A&M 45

William Carey 70, Lambuth 54

NORTHWEST
Ill.-Chicago 71, Northwestern 64

Idaho 66, 63, Madras 46

LSU 75, Minnesota 67

Shawnee 52, Wash. State 47

Franklin State 52, South Bend 84

Wright 59, Michigan 63

Whitman 72, Wash.-Parkside 65

Wichita St., Akron 49

Youngstown 52, Buffalo 43

SOUTHWEST
Howard Payne 50, St. Mary's 54

FAR WEST
New Mexico St. 48, UTPE 44

College football

Bowl glance

Tuesday, Dec. 14

New Orleans Bowl
Payoff: \$750,000

South Mississippi 31, North Texas 10

Tuesday, Dec. 14

Champs Sports Bowl
At Orlando, Fla.

Payoff: \$850,000

Georgia Tech (6-5) vs. Southern Cal (6-5)

Wednesday, Dec. 22

Las Vegas Bowl
At Las Vegas, Nev.

Payoff: \$750,000

Memphis (8-2) vs. Bowling Green (8-3)

Thursday, Dec. 23

Fort Worth (Texas) Bowl
Payoff: \$700,000

Cincinnati (6-5) vs. Marshall (6-5)

Las Vegas Bowl
At Las Vegas, Nev.

Payoff: \$750,000

Virginia Tech (6-5) vs. Virginia Tech (6-5)

Friday, Dec. 24

Hawaii Bowl
Payoff: \$750,000

UAB (7-4) vs. Hawaii (7-4)

Saturday, Dec. 27

MPC Computers Bowl
Payoff: \$750,000

San Diego State (6-5) vs. Fresno State (6-5)

Motor City Bowl
Payoff: \$750,000

Toledo (9-3) vs. Connecticut (7-4)

Independence Bowl
Payoff: \$1.2 million

Iowa State (6-5) vs. Michigan (8-4)

Insight Bowl
Payoff: \$750,000

Oregon State (5-5) vs. Notre Dame (6-5)

Houston Bowl
Payoff: \$1.1 million

Texas A&M (6-5) vs. Colorado (7-4)

At San Antonio
Payoff: \$750,000

Ohio State (7-4) vs. Oklahoma State (7-4)

Continental Tire Bowl
At Charlotte, N.C.

Payoff: \$750,000

Boston College (8-3) vs. North Carolina (6-5)

Emerald Bowl
Payoff: \$750,000

New Mexico (7-4) vs. Navy (9-2)

Holiday Bowl
Payoff: \$1.2 million

Idaho (10-1) vs. Texas Tech (6-5)

At San Jose, Calif.
Payoff: \$1.5 million

San Jose State (6-5) vs. Washington State (6-5)

Music City Bowl
Payoff: \$750,000

At Nashville, Tenn.

Sun Bowl
Payoff: \$1.5 million

At El Paso, Texas

Payoff: \$1.5 million

Purdue (7-4) vs. Arizona State (6-5)

Liberty Bowl
Payoff: \$1.5 million

Boise State (11-0) vs. Louisville (10-1)

At Atlanta
Payoff: \$1.2 million

Miami (8-3) vs. Florida (7-4)

At Dallas
Payoff: \$1.5 million

Tennessee (9-3) vs. Texas A&M (7-4)

At Tampa, Fla.
Payoff: \$1.2 million

Wisconsin (9-2) vs. Georgia (9-2)

At Jacksonville, Fla.
Payoff: \$1.6 million

Florida State (8-3) vs. Wake Forest (6-5)

Capital One Bowl
Payoff: \$1.5 million

At Orlando, Fla.

Rose Bowl
Payoff: \$1.5 million

Michigan (9-2) vs. Texas (10-1)

At Tampa, Fla.
Payoff: \$1.5 million

Monday, Jan. 18

Sugar Bowl
Payoff: \$1.1 million

Auburn (12-0) vs. Virginia Tech (10-2)

Tuesday, Jan. 4

Orange Bowl
Payoff: \$1.1 million

South Carolina (10-0) vs. Louisville (12-0)

Saturday, Jan. 15

At the Villages, Fla.
Payoff: \$1.1 million

North vs. South

Saturday, Jan. 22

Hula Bowl
Payoff: \$1.1 million

Alma vs. Kal

Saturday, Jan. 29

Senior Bowl
Payoff: \$1.1 million

North vs. South

NCAA Div. I-AA playoffs

Semifinals
Friday, Dec. 17

James Madison 48, William & Mary 34

Championship
Friday, Dec. 17

Montana 34, San Houston State 13

At Finley Stadium, Newport Field, Chattanooga, Tenn.
NCAA Division (12-2) vs. Montana (12-2)

Semifinals
Saturday, Dec. 11

Mary Hardin-Baylor 38, Mount Union, Ohio 35

Championship
Saturday, Dec. 11

At the Villages, Fla.

Staggs Bowl
Payoff: \$1.1 million

At Salem, Mass.

Alamo Bowl
Payoff: \$1.1 million

Mary Hardin-Baylor (13-1) vs. UNLV, Ore. (12-2)

NAIA playoffs

Championship
Saturday, Dec. 18

At the Villages, Fla.

Harden County, Tenn.
St. Francis, Ind. (13-0) vs. Carroll, Mont. (11-2)

High school

Japan wrestling

National basketball association

At the Villages, Fla.
Payoff: \$1.1 million

101 James Madison, Kentucky, pinned Jeremiah Safield, 126

110 Jason Rodriguez, Yokota, superior defeated Nick Carroll, 125-235

122 Robert Rodger, Yokota, pinned Phil Kier, 128

129 Alex Curtis, Kinnick, pinned Jimmy Brown, 120

135 Myerlin Ibanez, Kinnick, pinned George Gress, 120

144 Kenji Doguchi, Kinnick, pinned Kyle Shoshokuro, 126

146 Andrew Brown, Kinnick, pinned Justin Smith, 128

148 Yomo Cibulka, Kinnick, pinned Mike Lahey, 126

149 James Wood, Kinnick, pinned Paul Johnson, 128

150 Adam Krievs, Kinnick, pinned Garrett McCall, 144

151 James Scott, Yokota, pinned Rodger Thomas, 128

152 Kenneth Randall Pelletier, Yokota, by walkover

At Tampa, Fla.
Payoff: \$1.2 million

Wisconsin (9-2) vs. Georgia (9-2)

At Jacksonville, Fla.
Payoff: \$1.6 million

Florida State (8-3) vs. Wake Forest (6-5)

Capital One Bowl
Payoff: \$1.5 million

At Orlando, Fla.

Rose Bowl
Payoff: \$1.5 million

Michigan (9-2) vs. Texas (10-1)

At Tampa, Fla.
Payoff: \$1.5 million

Monday, Jan. 18

Sugar

Southern Miss shuts down 1. Texas to open bowl season

BY BRETT MARTEL
The Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Southern Mississippi coach Jeff Bower relied on an array of linebacker blitzes to slow down freshman running back Jamario Thomas.

The scheme stifled North Texas' passing game as well.

Southern Miss ended Thomas' streak of 100-yard games at seven, sacked quarterback Scott Hall six times and got a 62-yard touchdown on Michael Boley's interception of an attempted screen pass. The result was a 31-10 victory in the New Orleans Bowl on Tuesday night, Southern Mississippi's first postseason triumph in four years.

"The key was getting pressure on the quarterback and making him throw quick. No quarterback wants to be out of rhythm," Bower said. "Sometimes when you do that you get a little more effort. When you blitz and go fast you may pick up the tempo a little bit."

Boley, named MVP of the first bowl of the postseason, made eight tackles, including two sacks.

As for the Southern Miss offense, Dustin Almond threw for 247 yards. He led the team on a pass and ran for a score in the opening quarter, giving the Golden Eagles an early lead they never relinquished.

North Texas' season had been defined by adversity overcome.

Quarterback Andrew Smith died in a car accident just before training camp, starting running back Patrick Cobbs injured his knee in the second game and never returned, and the Mean Green lost their first four games before winning seven straight to earn their fourth bowl trip to the New Orleans Bowl.

But Southern Miss (7-5), which narrowly lost to No. 4 California earlier this month, outplayed North Texas throughout. USM finished with a 403-212 advantage in total yards, with Southern Miss running back Anthony Harris gaining 104 yards on 14 carries.

North Texas, the four-time Sun Belt Conference champion, dropped to 1-3 in the New Orleans Bowl. Thomas, a freshman who missed his final regular-season game with a sore hamstring,



North Texas quarterback Scott Hall is sacked by Southern Mississippi linebacker Michael Boley during second half of the New Orleans Bowl.

finished with 92 yards on 30 carries.

"The biggest thing they did defensively was sending rovers off the outside edges, which gave us problems in the running and passing games," North Texas coach Darrell Dickey said. "We didn't play our best football. We couldn't run like we're accustomed to."

Hall was held to just 57 yards passing through three quarters. He finished 15-for-30 for 134 yards and two interceptions.

"They brought it today," Hall said. "Guys were coming off the edge all night. They took away our play-action game."

USM's relentless defensive pressure included a key first-half play in which Hall rushed a third-and-goal throw that sailed over the outstretched arms of a wide-open Ben Davidson in the end zone.

That forced the Mean Green to settle for Nick Bazaldua's 24-yard field goal — their only score until Hall's 10-yard TD pass to Johnny Quinn with 1 second left in the game.

Boley stretched to grab Hall's screen pass and ran it all the way

back to give Southern Miss a 24-1 lead with 1:52 remaining.

"They ran the same play early in the game... and threw it right by me," the linebacker said. "I just kind of stopped, got in the throwing lane and luckily he threw it to me."

Southern Miss 31, N. Texas 10
North Texas

USM — Graves 37 pass from Almond (McAleble kick), 1:10.
USM — Almond 1 run (McAleble kick), 6:13.

Second Quarter
NT — FG Bazaldua 24, 10:58.

USM — Moore 1 run (McAleble kick), 1:26.
USM — Quinn 10 pass from Hall (Bazaldua kick), 4:27.

Third Quarter
USM — 37 pass from Almond (McAleble kick), 1:10.

Fourth Quarter
USM — Moore 1 run (McAleble kick), 1:26.

USM — Quinn 10 pass from Hall (Bazaldua kick), 4:27.

Individual Statistics
Rushing — Southern Miss: Harris 14-104, Moore 10-33, Thomas 4-28, Weapley 1-2, Almond 1-20, 1-1, N. Texas: Thomas 16-92, Mitchell 1-1, Mitchell 1-1, Hall 8-minus (16).

Passing — Southern Miss: Almond 16-30-120, N. Texas: Hall 16-30-134.

Receiving — Southern Miss: Almond 5-57, Graves 3-58, Pettine 2-25, Thomas 2-33, Williams 1-47, Harris 1-33, Lawrence 1-33, Almond 1-1, N. Texas: Quinn 8-92, Blount 3-33, Almond 1-1, Mitchell 1-5, Jackson 1-7, Thomas 1-4.

M. Jones sues Conte, denies using steroids

The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Olympic track star Marion Jones filed a defamation lawsuit Wednesday against BALCO boss Victor Conte, who told a national TV audience that he gave her steroids and watched her inject herself with them.

Jones is seeking \$25 million in the suit, alleging Conte tarnished her reputation when he made the statement Dec. 3 on ABC's "20/20."

Conte and three others connected to the Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative were indicted in February by a federal grand jury for a variety of alleged offenses, including illegally distributing steroids.

The suit, filed in U.S. District Court in San Francisco, said Jones passed a lie detector test and includes a statement from her doctor saying she never used steroids. Jones won three gold medals and two bronzes during the 2000 Summer Games in Sydney, Australia.

Conte's statements, the suit said, "are false and malicious."

In an e-mail to The Associated Press, Conte said the lawsuit was "nothing more than a PR stunt by a desperate woman, who has regularly used drugs throughout her career. I look forward with all confidence to the court proceedings as I stand by everything I said on the '20/20' special."

Conte, BALCO vice president James Valente, track coach Remi Korchemny and Greg Anderson, the personal trainer for baseball slugger Barry Bonds, face federal indictment on a range of accusations.

Orgerson's father: Ole Miss has hired USC assistant

JACKSON, Miss. — Mississippi has hired Southern California assistant Ed Orgerson to coach the Rebels, Orgerson's father told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

Ole Miss scheduled a news conference Thursday to introduce a new coach, school spokesman Langston Rogers said, though he declined further comment.

"It's a done deal," Edward Orgerson Sr., the coach's father, said Wednesday in a phone interview from his home in Larose, La.

Athletic director Pete Boone was the coach's father, said Wednesday, but would not confirm the hiring of Orgerson.

SEC will fine schools if fans ruin the field

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Southeastern Conference schools could face fines of as much as \$50,000 if fans come onto the field or court during football or basketball games.

The policy was approved by all SEC schools and took effect Dec. 1. It states that "access to competition areas shall be limited to participating student-athletes, coaches, officials, support personnel and properly credentialed individuals at all times."

"This policy is designed to create a safe environment for our student-athletes, coaches, staff and fans," SEC commissioner Mike Slive said Tuesday. "Our institutions felt that this was a step that needed to be taken."

Sports briefs

Four Oregon State players won't play in Insight Bowl

CORVALLIS, Ore. — Four suspended Oregon State players won't be reinstated to play in the Insight Bowl on Dec. 28 against Notre Dame.

Coach Mike Riley announced that Joe Rudolph, Brent Bridges, Anthony Wheeler-Brown and Whitfield Usher cannot practice with the team as it prepares for the bowl game in Phoenix.

The suspensions stem from two separate incidents at the Hyattline Cafe in Corvallis, including an assault on an Oregon National Guardsman.

Oregon State (6-5) finished tied for third in Pac-10.

De La Hoya will return to welterweight division

SAN JUAN — Oscar De La Hoya said he will not retire from boxing and plans to return to the welterweight division.

De La Hoya said he has no immediate plans on future bouts but ruled out staying in the middleweight division, in which he lost his fight in a nasty, bloody knockout against undisputed champion Bernard Hopkins.

"I'm not retired at all," De La Hoya told El Nuevo Dia newspaper in Puerto Rico. "From 147 to 150 [pounds], that's my natural weight. It's almost impossible to do something in the 154 or 160 division."

The Olympic champion in Barcelona in 1992 has held titles in six weight divisions, from lightweight to middleweight.

Charge dropped after Tyson complains of domestic violence

NEW YORK — Mike Tyson closed the book Wednesday on one of his many run-ins with the law: his brawl last year with two men outside a Brooklyn hotel.

Wearing a pink button-down shirt, leather jacket and cap pulled low over his eyes, Tyson made his way through a clump of photographers and the occasional fan to a downtown Brooklyn courtroom.

The former heavyweight champion had completed the 900 hours of community service imposed when he pleaded guilty to disorderly conduct under an agreement with prosecutors, lawyer Mel Sachs told the judge.

"He's had a remarkable effect on the children of the community," Sachs said.

With prosecutors' consent, the judge dismissed the charge against Tyson and ordered the recording of Sachs' court decision "a victory for Mike Tyson."

Bush, not Leinart, chosen USC's MVP

LOS ANGELES — Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback Matt Leinart wasn't even selected the most valuable player on his own team.

That honor went to running back Reggie Bush at No. 1 Southern California's annual awards banquet. USC commissioner Mike Slive said Tuesday. "Our institutions felt that this was a step that needed to be taken."

The awards were determined by a vote of the players.

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Washington's deal for Expos placed in jeopardy

D.C. council's ballpark-financing package could cause baseball to reopen search

BY BRETT ZONKGER
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Baseball fans in the nation's capital might not have long to cheer their new team.

The District of Columbia Council voted 7-6 Tuesday night to approve legislation that would finance construction of a ballpark.

But it contained a provision that could cause the baseball commissioner's office to reopen the search for a long-term home for the Expos franchise, which has been tentatively renamed the Nationals.

The legislation was amended to require private financing for at least half the stadium construction costs, a provision not contained in the September agreement between baseball and Washington Mayor Anthony A. Williams.

"We will review the amendments and the legislation as passed and have a re-

sponse [Wednesday]," said Bob DuPuy, baseball's chief operating officer.

One response came almost immediately: The team postponed a news conference scheduled for Wednesday to unveil its new uniforms. No explanation was given.

The group that tried to lure the Expos to Northern Virginia was prepared to revise its bid.

"I don't think we've ever stopped," Norfolk group head Will Somerdyke Jr. said Wednesday. "We always wanted to keep this area an option. If the opportunity arises for the Expos again, we are going to be standing there along with everyone else."

"Whether we could get something done by next year, I think that's a stretch," he added. "It would be very, very tough."

Somerdyke's organization has returned the deposits it collected on nearly 10,000 season tickets and almost 100 luxury boxes during its drive to get the Expos. He didn't think it would be difficult to get those deposits back.

Council Chair Linda W. Cropp's amendment passed on a 10-3 vote after she threatened to withhold support from the overall package if the provision wasn't approved. Cropp said she didn't think the change violated the city's agreement with baseball, but would pressure Williams to find a private financier.

"I am not trying to kill the deal," said Cropp, who introduced the private financing measure. "I'm putting me teeth in it because I'm really disappointed with what I got from Major League Baseball."

Williams refused to answer questions after the vote.

"We'll have to see how baseball reacts," said Councilman Jack Evans, a baseball proponent. But he said he expects the council will have to change the legislation to keep the deal alive.

"We'll have until the end of the year to change this," Evans said.

City Administrator Robert Bobb said

city negotiators were talking with baseball officials, but he didn't expect the owners to accept the change.

If the law stands, baseball's most likely response would be to have the team play the 2005 season at Washington's RFK Stadium while baseball's search committee resumes negotiations with cities that want the team.

One option could be Las Vegas, which was among the cities competing for the Expos and is still lobbying for a team. Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman campaigned at last week's winter meetings, arriving accompanied by showgirls wearing feathered headresses.

Baseball opponents in Washington said the change makes the deal more equitable. "All we're asking for is private financing for half the stadium," said Councilman Adrian Fenty, who voted against the final legislation. "That shouldn't be a problem."

Associated Press writer Derrill Holly contributed to this story.

Brother: Renteria to sign with Boston

Deal for free-agent All-Star shortstop reported to be for four years, \$40M

BY JIMMY GOLEN
The Associated Press

BOSTON — All-Star shortstop Edgar Renteria is nearing an agreement with the Boston Red Sox on a contract, his brother said Wednesday.

The deal is worth \$40 million over four years with an option for a fifth season, a baseball source told The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity. The deal was not final, but Edison Renteria told the AP that an agreement on the terms was reached Tuesday night.

"We will travel to Boston later this week to define the details of the four-year contract," he said in a telephone interview from Barranquilla, Colombia. "Edgar is very happy. The conditions are excellent."

Red Sox President Larry Lucchino declined to comment on Renteria and never mentioned

the player by name when saying the World Series champions hoped to have an announcement in the next day or two.

"An All-Star and Gold Glove infielder would be a great addition to this or any other team," Lucchino said.

The deal was first reported by The Boston Globe, which quoted Edgar Renteria in a story posted on its Web site Wednesday.

"I like to play on a winning team like Boston, St. Louis or any team that has the opportunity to win," the paper quoted him as saying. His decision came down to the two pennant winners, and he said the Red Sox were "more interested in my playing for them."

Lucchino said the team has a policy not to comment on deals until they are complete, but "players are free to speak their minds whenever they like. We are happy that players are excited to join us."

The Red Sox intensified their efforts to sign Renteria after three-time Cy Young winner Pedro Martinez passed on Boston's three-year, \$40.5 million offer and said he would sign with the New York Mets.

Red Sox General Manager Theo Epstein said at the winter meetings that Martinez would not necessarily be replaced by an equally pricey pitcher. Instead, money set aside for him or catcher Jason Varitek — a free agent who is expected to command \$50 million over five years — might instead be spent on upgrading other positions.

"We will redeploy the money that would've been spent," Lucchino said after Martinez chose the Mets. "That's a considerable amount of resources to redeploy."

Renteria was a four-time All-Star and two-time Gold Glove winner, with a .289 career average in six years with the St. Louis

Cardinals. He made the final out in Boston's sweep of the Cardinals, grounding out to pitcher Keith Foulke.

The Red Sox had been worrying about a shortstop since last winter, when they tried to trade five-time All-Star Nomar Garciaparra before he entered the last year of his contract. The deal for then-AL MVP Alex Rodriguez fell through, but Garciaparra was so wounded by the trade talks that his attitude suffered and Boston sent him to the Chicago Cubs at the trading deadline.

The Red Sox got shortstop Orlando Cabrera, along with first baseman Doug Mientkiewicz, in return, improving the defense that led the AL in unearned runs and sparking Boston to a wild-card berth.

Cabrera, who is also Colombian, batted .294 with six homers and 31 RBIs with the Red Sox. He hit .288 and played errorless ball



Edgar Renteria

in the postseason as Boston won its first World Series since 1918.

The Cardinals have shown a lot of interest this offseason in signing Cabrera, a free agent.

Associated Press reporters Ronald Blum and Jaio Anchicchea contributed to this story.

Sluggar Sexson agrees to four-year deal with Mariners

The Associated Press

SEATTLE — The Seattle Mariners, needing to add power to one of the weakest lineups in the major leagues last season, agreed Wednesday to a four-year contract with free-agent first baseman Richie Sexson.

The 6-foot-7 Sexson, a career .271 hitter, is coming off an injury-shortened season with the Arizona Diamondbacks. He hurt his left shoulder twice and did not play after May, batting .233 with nine homers and 23 RBIs.

"I feel great and I am looking forward to getting back on the field," Sexson said.

Still, his proven power made him an attractive free agent.

Sexson, who turns 30 on Dec. 29, hit 45 homers for Milwaukee in 2001 and 2003, and he has four career 100-RBI seasons.

He has 200 career home runs and has averaged 32 homers and 94 RBIs each season over his past four years, despite the injury last season.

"I am very excited about coming home

MLB briefs

Seattle has struggled in recent years to score runs. Last year, the Mariners ranked last in the AL in runs (857), RBIs (658) and home runs (136).

Players, owners resume steroid talks

NEW YORK — Lawyers for baseball's players' association and owners resumed the Tuesday aimed at a new agreement to toughen rules on steroid testing.

Neither side commented on the session, which was described as a part of the process. Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig wants more testing, harsher penalties and additional banned substances.

The executive board of the players' association last week gave its staff authoriza-

tion to go ahead with the talks. The current agreement, criticized by management and politicians, runs through the 2006 season.

Bradley begins serving jail sentence

CUYAHOGA FALLS, Ohio — Los Angeles Dodgers outfielder Milton Bradley began serving a three-day jail sentence on Wednesday for driving away while being issued a speeding ticket more than a year ago.

Bradley's appeals in the case were exhausted last week when the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that the trial judge did not unfairly sentence him. He also argued that the state did not merit jail time and would hurt him professionally.

Reds sign relievers Weathers, Weber

CINCINNATI — Right-handers David Weathers and Ben Weber agreed to one-year contracts Wednesday with the Cincinnati Reds.

Weathers and Weber, both 35, join a bull-

pen that had a 5.12 ERA last season, second worst in the major leagues ahead of only Colorado.

Red Sox add left-hander Halama

BOSTON — The Red Sox added John Halama to their pitching staff Wednesday, persuading the versatile left-hander to join the World Series champions with a contract that could keep him in Boston through 2006.

Halama was given one year with a mutual option for a second. He was 7-6 with a 4.70 ERA in 34 games for the Tampa Bay Devil Rays last season.

Monroe pleads not guilty to shoplifting

PORT CHARLOTTE, Fla. — Detroit Tigers outfielder Craig Monroe pleaded not guilty Wednesday to shoplifting a belt.

Police arrested Monroe on a misdemeanor charge Dec. 3 after they said he wrapped the \$29.99 belt around his waist and tried to leave without paying for it.

SPORTS



All-Star Renteria agrees to deal with Boston; Sexson bound for Seattle, Page 30



Fading into a purple haze

Late swoon puts Vikings at risk of missing playoffs

BY DAVE CAMPBELL
The Associated Press

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. — The Minnesota Vikings were convinced they wouldn't end this season like they did the last, when a 6-0 start was wiped out by a 3-7 finish.

Well, they could be right. This season might be worse.

Fresh off their fifth loss in seven games, the Vikings are 7-6 and coach Mike Tice's future is in question. For Minnesota's tortured football fans, these circumstances are hauntingly familiar. This franchise can surely compete with anyone in the disappointment department.

"Right now things don't look very cheerful," said Tice, who spent much of his Monday playing Dr. Phil to those needing therapy after a 27-23 home defeat to struggling Seattle.

"You want all your goals to come out exactly as you planned ... not many times does it come out exactly the way you dreamed about."

Over their 44-year history, the Vikings have been one of the NFL's most consistent winners — but something always keeps them from greatness. As people who root for the rival Green Bay Packers love to point out, Minnesota was beaten in all four Super Bowl appearances — the last coming after the 1976 season.



Minnesota Vikings quarterback Daunte Culpepper, left, is brought down by Seattle Seahawks defensive end Antonio Cochran, right, on the last play of the Seahawks 27-23 victory Sunday in Minneapolis, the Vikings' fifth loss in seven games.

Coach Dennis Green won 100 games in 10 years, but his teams frequently choked in the playoffs. The most memorable, or cringe-inducing, of those disasters came in the NFC championship game following the 1998 season. The team that went 15-1 and set the league's all-time scoring record blew a late lead and lost in overtime at home to the Atlanta Falcons.

Two years later, the Vikings dropped their final three regular-season games to lose the NFC's top seed and were embarrassingly eliminated by New York in the conference title game at Giants Stadium, 41-0.

Tice's rebuilding project seemed to hit stride last year with six straight wins to open the season, but then came a brutal stretch in which Minnesota lost to all four teams on the game's final play, stung the most — and left the Vikings out of the playoffs for a third consecutive year.

Owner Red McCombs, in town for the organization's annual Christmas party, was reminded Monday of a somber plane ride back to San Antonio with his family after that devastating defeat to the Cardinals.

McCombs asked his grandson, Joseph, if his friends would be teasing him the next day in school because the Vikings lost. He said they would, and McCombs asked him how he usually handles it.

"Well, you know, it's not the first time," the 13-year-old replied.

Nope, it certainly isn't. Despite a 5-1 start in a soft NFC that suggested a chance for January success, the Metrodome — perennially one of the most difficult places for opponents to play — hasn't been as loud this season.

Especially in situations, like a critical third down for the defense in a tight game or a long touchdown reception by Randy Moss, that normally require earplugs or threaten long-term hearing ability.

It's almost as if these scarred patrons are simply expecting something bad to happen and can't conjure enough energy to lift their voices to the usual high level.

Tice, the league's lowest-paid coach, has managed to maintain his optimism despite the uncertainty. McCombs must decide by Jan. 1 whether to pick up a \$1 million option on the coach's contract for 2005, and inaction would give Tice the freedom to pursue other jobs on Jan. 31.

McCombs has said repeatedly he'll deal with it after the season, but the Vikings' final regular-season game is the day after the deadline and their playoff fate probably won't be decided by then.

If Minnesota doesn't qualify for the post-season, it's hard to imagine Tice coming back. But McCombs reiterated his support this week.

SEE HAZE ON PAGE 26



Linebackers E.J. Henderson, left, Chris Claiborne, center, and Keith Newman, right, watch the Vikings fall apart Sunday.

Former Utah coach Majerus to take over at USC starting next season

Page 31



Fueled Lakers rolled in Seattle

Page 28



Duckett undergoes surgery now so he'll be ready for playoffs

Page 26

D.C. baseball on shaky ground after city council votes on deal

Page 30

